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Jnana Yoga

Method and Attainment

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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Method and Attainment



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Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

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of satsangs at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth,
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Dedication tip-on

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The Faculty of Intelligence

12 May 2011

Once there lived a lion in a jungle who was a very good hunter. One day, he wandered everywhere in search of prey. However, he could not catch a single animal.

At sunset, the lion went into a cave, thinking that it was bound to be the home of some animal. He calculated that when it returned in the evening, he would pounce upon it and make it his meal. With this thought, the lion stayed in the cave, hiding and waiting for the tenant of the cave to come back.

Sure enough, the tenant, which happened to be a jackal called Very Clever, returned in the evening. Before entering the cave, the jackal looked around. He noticed a set of footprints, which were not his own, going into the cave and recognized them as a lion's footprints. He looked carefully and realized that the footprints were leading into the cave but not out of it. He thought to himself, "There is a lion in my cave! But how can I know for sure? What can I do to find out?"

Suddenly, an idea struck him. He stood at the entrance of the cave and shouted out, "Hello Cave!" He repeated, "Cave! Cave! I am here." Naturally, the cave remained silent. After waiting for some time, the jackal again called out, "Cave, cave! I am here! Why are you not answering me? Have you forgotten the pact we made? We agreed that every evening I would call out to you, and you would welcome me home. You would say, 'Welcome!' What happened, why are you not



welcoming me today? If you do not reply, I shall go away to some other cave.”

Now, the lion was all brawn and no brain. He thought to himself, “If the jackal is calling out to the cave, they must have promised to welcome each other. The cave is not responding because I am sitting here and it is afraid of me. Before the jackal goes away, I should pretend to be the cave and invite him in.” The lion called out to the jackal, “Come in, come in! Welcome!” But the lion had forgotten that his voice was not like that of the cave. It was a roar so loud that the entire cave echoed and even animals far away became frightened. The jackal said to the cave, “Your voice has changed today”, and bolted, saying to himself, “He who anticipates the coming of a disaster and acts accordingly, is spared. He who fails to anticipate it comes to grief. I have grown old living in this jungle, but I have never heard a cave talking!”

The point that emerges from the story is that it is the application of intelligence which makes you clever. If you apply your intelligence properly, you are clever. If you do not apply your intelligence properly, you are dumb. The application of the intellect saved the jackal from becoming

prey to the lion. When he saw the footprints of the lion leading into the cave, he did not get scared or run away. Instead, he used his intelligence to find out who was inside the cave. The lion was dumb; he did not apply his intelligence. Had he applied his intelligence, he would have wondered how a cave could possibly speak. Therefore, proper application and use of the intellect makes you clever.

The faculty of intelligence

Everyone possesses the faculty of intelligence, but cleverness manifests when the intellect is combined with knowing and intuitive discrimination. If the knowing discriminative ability is not there in the intellect, one remains dumb despite possessing intelligence. Cleverness indicates a state of mind which is sharp, perceptive, receptive and responsive. It is a state of mind which leads one to avoid many pitfalls in life. If the clever state of mind does not prevail; rather, the dumb state prevails, there is conflict, confusion, doubt and uncertainty, and one wastes life away.

The intellect is a faculty which has been granted to human beings and not to any other creature in this world. What is the meaning of intellect? “I know that I am.” “I know that I live.” That awareness is the intellectual awareness of “I exist.” Animals have a mind which is not self-aware, it is not intellect-based; it is based on instinct. Animals feel hungry, but they don’t know that they are hungry. You feel hungry and you know that you are hungry. You can say, “I am hungry. I feel hunger. My stomach is rumbling.” You can use many different sentences to define what you are feeling, with the aid of your intellect. An animal does not have this faculty. It has the instinctive faculty. It lives, but it does not have the awareness “I live.” It feels hungry, but it does not have the awareness “I am hungry.” Human beings have that quality of awareness and understanding. This understanding is *buddhi* or intelligence. It is an expression of consciousness, just as feelings and emotions, thinking, analyzing and rationality, and being self-aware are expressions of consciousness.

A new approach to jnana yoga

The tradition of yoga explains the subject of intelligence or buddhi clearly. Yogis have understood buddhi to be as important as the mind, emotions, prana and body. They devised different systems of yoga, each system being a process to explore the potential inherent in different states and conditions of life. It is commonly believed there are five systems of yoga. The yogic tradition and our guru, Sri Swami Satyananda, have stated that there are five principle systems of yoga. The first is hatha yoga, for the body: to explore the potential inherent in the body and bring it to an optimum state of health and wellbeing. The second is raja yoga, for the mind: to explore the potential of the mind and to go beyond the mental limitations. The third is bhakti yoga, for the emotions: to explore emotions and channel them towards a positive, spiritual direction for uplifting and purifying the consciousness. The fourth is karma yoga, in which one tries to improve oneself through one's behaviour and actions: to interact in an effective, efficient and creative manner with the environment and oneself. In the same way, to harness and properly utilize the potential of human intelligence, they devised the system of jnana yoga. Jnana yoga deals with the development and proper application of the faculty of intelligence. Buddhi is the primary tool required in the practice of jnana yoga.

Every yoga has an aim and purpose, and the sadhana of that yoga takes the practitioner towards that aim. What is the sadhana of jnana yoga? What is its aim? The goal of jnana yoga is to free the *vishayatmika*, object-oriented, and *vyavasayatmika*, negotiation-oriented, buddhi, due to which you struggle in life and realize pain and pleasure, to know itself. That is the purpose of jnana yoga: to know and realize oneself by becoming free of the bondages of the world.

Normally, when people think of jnana yoga, they equate it with self-enquiry, with the question, "Who am I?" If you open any book or observe any statement made in relation to jnana yoga, it will say, "Jnana yoga is self-enquiry. Discover

your real nature, discover who you are. Are you this body? Are you this mind? Are you the senses? Find out who you truly are. Once you know that, you will become established in *jnana*, knowledge, and *buddhi*, intelligence.” However, this approach of enquiring “Who am I?” is not an appropriate *sadhana* for everyone.

If it was possible to attain something merely by thinking about it, then discipline, action and experience would have no meaning in life. If you could be satisfied by thought alone, then effort and action would have no meaning in life. If you are hungry and begin to think, “I am feeding myself, my stomach is becoming full, my hunger is being sated”, you will not be able to satiate your hunger. Similarly, if you are exhausted and begin to think, “I am relaxed, I am relaxed, I am relaxed”, you will not overcome your tiredness. Therefore, by thinking, “I am not this body, I am not this mind, I am not these senses”, how can you transcend the experiences of the body, mind or the senses? How, by thinking, “I am not the individual self, but a part and parcel of the cosmic Self”, can you become that?

It is not possible for an average person to accomplish this because your thoughts are dissipated. Your mind is so dissipated that it has no power, strength and *sankalpa*, resolve. You cannot even wake up at four in the morning without the aid of an alarm clock, and you want to attain Brahma-hood by thinking, “I am Brahman, I am Brahman, I am Brahman”! You cannot even guide your mind or control its reactions, and you wish to bring about transformation of the mind by thinking “I am Brahman, I am not this body, I am not this mind”! It is all delusion and self-hypnosis.

What, then, is the process of *jnana yoga*?

Yogic view of intelligence

To understand the process of *jnana yoga*, you have to understand what *buddhi* or intelligence is from the yogic perspective. We are not talking about the normal, social understanding of intelligence. We are talking of the yogic

thoughts and principles which allow the flowering of intelligence.

From the yogic perspective, buddhi or intelligence is experienced in two forms. One form connects with and relates to the world of senses and sense objects and the other creates a link between the gross mind and the higher self.

Every individual in this world lives the first aspect, where the intelligence is connected with the outer environment, with the senses and sense objects. This gives birth to *bahirmukhi vritti*, extroverted vritti. It means that your nature, your total mind is connecting with sense objects; one hundred percent of your mental faculties are associating with, connecting to, realizing and experiencing the material and sensorial dimension. This interaction between the total mind, the intelligence, sense objects and the sensorial world creates a condition of mind which is gross. This condition is known as *vishayakara vritti*, the modifications or states of mind are connected with sense objects, with *raga* and *dvesha*, craving and repulsion. The vishayakara vritti is the extroverted vritti identifying with sense objects. This is *apara buddhi*.

The other aspect of intelligence is where it is disconnected from the sensorial dimension, from the world of senses and sense objects. It becomes self-luminous. That state of self-luminosity is known as *prajnyatmika buddhi* or *para buddhi*, intelligence filled with the wisdom and luminosity of knowledge, which is transcendental. This is the state of mind which yogis aspire to attain. It has been defined in yoga as samadhi and in the *Bhagavad Gita* as *sthita prajna*, effulgent wisdom or effulgent intelligence.

Intelligence as tool of higher consciousness

Stability of intelligence is a sign of beginning the journey in jnana yoga. Without the intelligence becoming stable, firm and fixed, jnana yoga does not commence. This indication has been given by Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Arjuna poses a question, “O Krishna, tell me how can I attain you? How can I realize you?” Krishna says, “There are three



methods. The first is, fix your mind on me – *Mayyeva mana adhatsva.*” (12:8:1) Arjuna says, “That will be difficult because the mind cannot be made stable; it cannot be fixed. Just as the wind cannot be contained and stilled, in the same manner, the mind cannot be contained or stilled. The behaviour, nature and character of the mind is not to be still, but to continuously move like the wind.”

It is not easy to still the mind and connect it with the *atma tattva*, the spirit element, unless there is intense mental resolve and will force. If there is a strong will, then one can move the mind away from objects and fix it upon a point. Until there is intensity of will and resolve, the mind cannot be made steady. You have all experienced that movement of the mind. Whenever you need to concentrate on anything, you find that the mind goes away from that point. You cannot hold the mind fixed on the object of concentration for long. A classic example is the practice of mantra. When you do your japa,

for how many beads are you aware of the mantra? How many times in the course of one mala do you have to bring your mind back to the japa? For many people, practising one mala of mantra takes about five minutes. Even in those five minutes, you have to pull the mind back to the japa fifty times. What is the percentage of your concentration and mental fixity? Five beads of a mala? Ten beads of a mala? If you can remain focused on your mantra for only ten beads before it goes to some other place, it is a shameful condition. It indicates lack of control over the mental fluctuations and validates what Arjuna had said to Krishna, “To contain and control the mind is as difficult as containing and controlling the wind. I can try, but I don’t know if I will succeed in fixing my mind on you.”

Krishna says, “First, try to fix the mind.” Arjuna says, “It requires too much struggle with the mind.” Krishna says, “All right, the second method is, fix your intellect on me – *Mayi buddhim niveshaya*.” (12:8:1) Arjuna says, “How is that possible?” Krishna explains, “Your intelligence is dispersed because of the association with the senses and sense objects. You, with your buddhi, identify with what you crave and desire. Remove your buddhi from those cravings, desires and self-oriented thoughts, and remember me with a feeling of satisfaction and contentment.” It is easier to still the intellect compared to the mind, as the intellect can take the shelter of jnana, wisdom, and influence the thinking. Once the intellect finds the shelter of jnana, then the thought process and mind move in the right direction. In addition, the strength of the intellect can be used to awaken the feeling of oneness. This can be understood with an example.

Imagine that you are a parent and your children have gone to Europe to work or study. Initially, you will feel a bit lonely and isolated. You will miss and remember your children. At times, you may be up at night looking over their bed because you miss them. You miss them due to your attachment, but deep inside you are content and happy that they have gone to fulfil their mission in life, to excel in studies and succeed in their profession. You know that they are

living their own destiny and gaining name, fame and glory. If you focus on this thought, then you will not be depressed or sad, although you will miss your children. Rather, you will be contented and satisfied that they are fulfilling their dharma in life. Therefore, if you become attached, there is no progress, but if you apply your intelligence you can find inner balance and contentment. Even though the children are far away, there is contentment, not attachment. In this way, when the attachment to the objects of the world reduces with right understanding, gradually the intellect becomes steady. When the intellect becomes perfectly steady, it is called *prajnyatmika buddhi*. You are no longer attached to your child, but are happy that whatever he or she is doing is for the best. The form of the intellect is different here. It is balanced; there is no restlessness in it. There is awareness in the intellect that you and your children are not separate; they are trying to attain their aim in life and so are you. Thus, when there is input of wisdom, the *vyavasayatmika buddhi* becomes *prajnyatmika buddhi*.

Just as parents can remember their children in distant countries and be happy for them, the devotee can fix the intellect on the Lord and be happy with a sense of contentment and satisfaction that they are with Him, that they are fixed in Him, they are together. Arjuna says, “If that is also difficult, is there any other method?” Krishna says, “Yes, there is another method, but that is even more difficult. The third method is complete surrender – *nivasishyasi mayyeva*.” (12:8:2) This means that even as you live in the world, remain *nirlipta*, non-attached, from it and stay with the Lord. It requires you to have the *nirlipta bhava*. If you are caught up in the world, the family and society, then *nivasishyasi mayyeva* will not be possible. It is necessary to disengage from the world to practise this method.

Krishna gives Arjuna three methods to realize the divine nature. The sublime and the highest method is total surrender, “Detach from the world and reside in me.” If, disengaging from the world, you remain absorbed in the

thoughts of the Supreme and see the whole world as a reflection of the Supreme, your journey in the right direction is assured. The medium method is fixing the intelligence and not allowing it to waver in the dimension of the senses and sense objects. By using the intelligence and allowing wisdom to flower within, you can attain the state of contentment and steadiness. The lower grade method is, bring back your mind again and again. Whenever it goes away, bring it back and focus again.

Jnana yoga deals with the second method, fixing the intelligence. This leads to a different understanding and belief of life. It has also been called abstract philosophy, but it is a different understanding and belief of life.

Vedanta and Advaita believe in monism: everything is one, “I am part of that; that is part of me.” There is no duality. When there is no duality, there is no concept, understanding, idea or awareness of you and me as separate beings. In that state of unified experience, when everything has come together, you realize your true nature, “I am the higher consciousness.” This is the statement of Advaita Vedanta, the system or school of thought which believes in monism or unity of life. Jnana yogis who reach the apex of jnana speak of this experience. According to them, the core precept of jnana yoga is to be able to perceive oneself and the whole world as part of the one indestructible principle, *ishwara*.

Vedantic foundation of jnana yoga

In the Vedas, four statements have been given which constitute the foundation of jnana yoga from the Vedantic perspective. They are called mahavakyas or profound statements:

1. *Aham Brahmasmi*: I am the higher consciousness.
2. *Tat Twam Asi*: You are that.
3. *Ayam Atma Brahma*: My soul is the higher consciousness.
4. *Prajnanam Brahman*: Brahman is knowledge and realization.

The Vedas have given these four sentences to reflect upon, and they constitute the Vedic foundation of jnana yoga. The

problem, however, is that even if you begin to think, “I am that, I am that, I am that”, you don’t become ‘that’, as your reality of living is different from your thinking. The reality in which you live, you are totally engrossed and absorbed in whatever you are experiencing or undergoing. There is no objectivity. There is no concept or sense of becoming the drashta and observing the events as they take place. You become involved. Even sannyasins become involved. Those who have been teaching yoga for several years and have given innumerable lectures on raja yoga, the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali and the concept of drashta, start fighting with each other, as just by thinking, “I am this”, one does not become that.



Once I met a jnana yogi. Out of curiosity, I asked, “What kind of sadhana do you practise? Do you practise japa, dhyaana, asana, pranayama? What is your sadhana of jnana yoga?” He replied in a most natural manner, “Swamiji, every morning when I sit on my breakfast table, before picking up the newspaper, I ask myself, ‘Who am I?’ That is my sadhana.” I didn’t say anything at that time, but it did feel rather peculiar. After all, if you ask yourself “Who am I” at the time of breakfast, what is the reply you will receive? “I am the one eating breakfast.” You are likely to give yourself such silly replies. There is no internal research taking place. There is no depth of contemplation. It is not possible to become that merely by thinking “I am that”, for thought must be united with action. If thought just remains thought, it is a waste. But if it becomes one with behaviour and action, it is realization. It is not possible to realize something by merely thinking it. It requires effort.

Once, a man heard from a saint that God provides food for every creature. He asked the saint, “How is that possible?” The saint said, “Go and break that rock.” The man went with a big hammer and struck a blow to the rock. It broke into two. Now, there was a small crevice in the rock and a tiny frog was living in it. The saint asked the man, “Tell me, who has provided for this little frog living in the rock?” The man said, “Surely it is God.” Now he was convinced that God provides food for everyone. He went back home and thought, “If God provides for everyone, why do I need to work? I will sit down quietly and He will bring me food.” God was also watching this man and said to Himself, “I see, he is trying to test me. He is challenging me. Okay, let me see for how long he can remain hungry.” God also sat back. The man went out of his house, found a quiet spot and continued to sit there with only one thought in mind, “I need food, I need food, I need food.” A whole day passed, he was famished, but no food came. Finally, he decided to go home and ask his wife for food. The next day, again he sat down from morning till evening without a morsel, but no food came. Once again, he

had to return to his wife. On the third day, the saint came to him and the man said, “Swamiji, you said the other day that God provides food for everyone, but he did not do anything for me.” The saint asked him to explain what had happened, and the man related the whole incident. The saint replied, “When you sat idle expecting God to send you food, God did not do anything for you. He said, ‘This is an idler. He just wants a free meal. I will not give him anything.’ At the same time, God made arrangements for you so that when you were really hungry you made the effort to go home to your wife, who was inspired to feed you the most delicious meals. When you wanted to test God, did you make any effort? No. It was only when you felt that God wasn’t doing anything that you made the effort to walk back home and ask for food. The rest of the work was done by your wife.”

The story indicates that it is not enough to think, one has to also act, make effort. There is a story in the Upanishads. When God made man, man was hungry. He looked at food, but that did not satiate his hunger. He smelt the food, but that also did not satiate his hunger. He had to eat the food for his hunger to be satiated. There is a prescribed action for intake of food; you will have to perform it to satisfy your hunger. You will have to pick up the food and put it in your mouth, chew it and swallow it. Therefore, action is necessary. Thought and action, experience and action need to go together. In the same way, the four mahavakyas are not only intended for contemplation, but they must also become part of one’s behaviour. In order to do this, one needs to enhance the creativity of the intellect.

Enquiry: exploring reality

Each reality is as real as any other. Vedanta poses a question: is this real or is this unreal? If you say this is real, fine. If you say this is unreal, that is also fine. Both are perceptions, but you have to explain why you consider this to be real or unreal. For example, you sleep at night and have a dream. The dream is real for you while you are dreaming, but when

you wake up, what was real then is now only a dream. Which reality is real, the dreaming reality or the waking reality? Who knows! How can you say that you are not dreaming up this whole life? At the end of your eighty years when you die, perhaps you will wake up from this dream and say, “For eighty years I was dreaming that I had a wife, children and a home.” How do you know which reality is real? That is where the enquiry of jnana yoga begins. It does not begin with “Who am I?”, but with, “Which is the reality with which I identify?” If you identify with a particular reality, then try to excel in it. Try to explore the potential of that reality to the maximum. That is the core of jnana yoga.

The method of understanding the process of jnana yoga has to be understood properly. Is jnana only questioning? No. It is enlarging the scope of perception. It is not enquiry; it is enlarging the scope of perception. It is like working with an adjustable torchlight. You can twist its head to bring the light to a narrow point or enlarge its perimeter.



The normal state of buddhi is like that of a narrow beam of light. As the buddhi is narrow, the experiences of the mind, emotions and environment are also narrow. The moment you begin to adjust and enlarge the light, you can see a bigger area of the ground which has been illuminated. In the same manner, buddhi can be developed and expanded.

Beginning the process

In the process of jnana yoga, the first step is being aware of the material, sensorial or externally interactive buddhi, and then gradually arriving at stable buddhi.

Your buddhi has been groomed in a particular way, right from the time of your birth. The focus of its development has always been external. You go to school and learn the alphabet and that becomes the foundation for all learning in the future. A child can have the aspiration, “One day I want to become a scientist, a doctor, a pilot, an engineer, an astronaut.” The child can have all these desires, but the process of fulfilling any desire in life will always begin with primary class, with learning how to recognize the alphabet. If the child says, “I am not interested in learning the alphabet. I just want to become a doctor. I don’t want to study ABCD, I want to study medicine”, it will not work. In order to study medicine, you need to have the basic education. Know your ABCD, know the characters. Once the characters have been learnt, you can study and become anything in life. The process must be undergone, however long it takes.

Just as you have groomed your intellect with a certain training to function in the outer dimension and survive in the world, another grooming and training has to take place to condition the intellect to understand, appreciate and evolve on the path of jnana yoga. Just because you have gone to school and are labelled as literate, can you make a decision that you want to think about *Aham Brahmasmi* and become that? No. That is what people try to do. You have not studied the ABCD of spiritual life and you want to receive the degree!

The intellect which deals with the world, vyavasayatmika buddhi, is trained when you learn the alphabet in school, go through higher classes and college and acquire a university degree. Similarly, the four statements of the Vedas: *Aham Brahmasmi, Tat Tvam Asi, Ayam Atma Brahma, Prajnanam Brahman*, are the university degrees of jnana yoga that you acquire when you finish your study of the subject. They are not sadhanas, they are four degrees of the university of jnana yoga. To reach the level where you can acquire these degrees, the intellect which connects with the higher Self, prajnyatmika buddhi, must be trained. Your mind, which was operating through vyavasayatmika buddhi must be retrained and re-educated to evolve on the path of jnana yoga.

How can prajnyatmika buddhi be trained? By mere contemplation? That's rubbish. If you go on thinking, "I am divine, I am the Self, I am the Supreme Soul", nothing will happen. If you keep on repeating "Aham Brahmasmi" and at the same time are preoccupied with the affairs of the world, you will not realize that statement. When there is no training, the worldly intelligence will always hamper your thinking. How then will you progress? So, even in jnana yoga there is need for training so that you can experience the luminosity of your prajnyatmika buddhi. You need to go through a process of education so that at the end you can acquire the degree of the mahavakyas and emerge as a jnana yogi. This retraining and re-education of the mind does not begin with the scriptures, questioning, enquiry or any mental or intellectual gymnastic. It begins in a very simple way: developing the ability to become the drashta, the witness of buddhi.

Attaining the State of Prajna

A Sequential Method

13 May 2011

Jnana yoga literally means ‘yoga of knowledge’, though it is often translated as yoga of self-enquiry. In the system of yoga, five methods are considered important: first, hatha yoga for the body; second, raja yoga for the mind; third, bhakti yoga for the emotions; fourth, jnana yoga for cultivating inner wisdom; fifth, karma yoga to improve interaction with the environment, society and people.

These five yogas constitute the integral yoga of Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda. Of the five, jnana yoga is the least practised and hatha yoga is the most practised. Remember, yogis did not confine their attention only to the physical body or improvement of the quality of the physical dimension. They considered all the different aspects of human nature, character and personality which could be improved, sublimated and transformed to become creative, positive and beneficial to all concerned. In this process, jnana yoga is considered an important aspect of analyzing life and making the attempt to change the perception and interaction of buddhi, the intelligent faculty, from the gross and material to the spiritual and positive.

Buddhi: a special endowment

Buddhi translates to both intelligence and intellect, depending on the context. The two words, however, do not define the actual meaning of buddhi. The literal meaning of buddhi is



‘the faculty which knows and realizes’; it is the faculty of observation.

Buddhi is an aspect of consciousness. In yoga, consciousness is divided into four parts: manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara. *Ahamkara*, the ego identity, is very subtle. It is remote, distant in the background, yet exerts a very powerful influence on human life in creating self-identity and self-image.

Less subtle than it is *chitta*, the storehouse of memories, samskaras and karmas. *Manas*, finite mind, and buddhi are the two gross faculties, as they are interactive in the world of senses. They allow one to interact with the environment, connect with the senses and sense objects, experience the effects of one’s interaction with the world in the form of pleasure and happiness, pain and suffering, contentment and discontentment. Thus, manas and buddhi are the gross, interactive aspects of the dimension of consciousness, whereas chitta and ahamkara remain subtle.

Buddhi is the main component in providing an understanding of the world and oneself. It is a faculty which only human beings are endowed with; no other sentient being on this planet has this capacity. You know that you live. You know that you exist. You are aware of that idea, state and thought, which provides you the knowledge that you are living. That is a result or expression of buddhi in relation to total life, self-identity and self-image.

Buddhi has been divided into two categories from the yogic perspective: external buddhi and internal buddhi. People train their buddhi to always be external and extroverted. They do not train it to realize the inner dimension of life. Right from the beginning of education

in primary class, to its completion with the acquisition of a university degree, buddhi is trained to express itself only in the outer dimension. The faculty of knowing is applied only outwards.

Through its extroverted nature, buddhi guides the mental behaviour. Your thoughts are guided by buddhi. Your expectations and desires arise due to buddhi. You are able to understand your happiness and suffering due to your buddhi. It is a very powerful factor which controls and guides the performance and behaviour of the mind and the senses.

Attaining luminosity of buddhi

When buddhi is extroverted, it is coloured by *tamo guna* and *rajo guna*. All the three *gunas* – *sattwa*, purity; *rajas*, dynamism; and *tamas*, stagnancy – exist in buddhi. However, the predominance is of *tamas* and *rajas* in the extroverted state, while *sattwa* is relegated to the background. When buddhi is influenced by *tamas* and *rajas*, its expressions also contain the shades of these *gunas*. That is what is experienced in normal life.

Your buddhi is coloured by shades of *tamas* and *rajas*; therefore, your mental behaviour is self-oriented. Your thoughts, expectations and desires are self-oriented. Everything is for your own self. There is no selfless expression or behaviour in life when there is *tamas* and *rajas*. Selfless behaviour arises only when *sattwa* becomes predominant, while selfish behaviour is the result of the predominance of *tamas* and *rajas*. It is this selfishness which kills peace of mind and the harmonious state of mind, by giving birth to different desires, thoughts, expectations and needs, which may be real or which may be the expression of an ambition. The *tamasic* buddhi has to be converted into *sattwic* buddhi, where the luminosity of intelligence attains its peak. Right now, the luminosity of your intelligence is not at its peak. That is the process of *jnana yoga*: cultivating the quality of buddhi by stopping the natural flow of buddhi towards sense objects and sense enjoyment and redirecting it inwards, making it internalized.

When buddhi is dealing with the world, it does not experience peace. Every human being undertakes a twofold search: external and internal. In the external dimension you search for pleasure, comfort and prosperity. This is the external effort. In the internal dimension, you search for peace and balance so that you do not become disturbed or agitated. However, the buddhi that you use for both searches is the externalized buddhi which connects you with the world. You want to travel inwards through the medium of this buddhi and that is not possible. The extroverted buddhi again and again draws your mind, consciousness and concentration outwards. It has not been trained to become internalized. The education that it receives certainly develops it, but only in relation to the external world. Totally involved as it is with the world, it cannot have the awareness, wisdom or understanding to travel on the internal path. Therefore, even for jnana yoga, one needs training.

Culmination of human experience: mahavakyas

The sages say that jnana yoga marks the beginning of the process of contemplation of the self, and they have given four statements, or *mahavakyas*, to contemplate upon. They have said that if you contemplate upon these statements, gradually you will be able to know your real nature. However, the requirement is contemplation, which is possible only if the thought process remains focused. An average person's thought process is never focused at one point. The restless nature of the mind becomes a hindrance in the steadiness of the thought process. The first requirement of thinking and contemplation is a quiet and steady mind. It is only when the mind becomes still and steady that the number of thoughts and desires reduce, there is freedom from attachment with sense objects and one becomes established in oneself. When one becomes established in oneself, the process of jnana yoga begins.

Thus, although jnana yoga has been defined as yoga of self-enquiry or questioning, I differ from this view. It is not the yoga of enquiry or questioning. It is the yoga of realizing what

you truly are. The mahavakyas of the four Vedas are indicative of this. Each Veda has picked up a theme in its statement, which represents the final stage of human experience; not the world, not the senses, but the total human experience.

It is necessary to understand the meaning of the mahavakyas in the context of your life. The first mahavakya which allows you to establish yourself in jnana yoga is *Prajnanam Brahman*. It means, “Consciousness is Brahman.”

The word ‘Brahman’ is often equated with God, but in the spiritual traditions of India, not the religious traditions, the idea and concept of God is not God with form, but God with specific qualities and attributes. God is neither formless nor with form. Those are individual interpretations, projections, thoughts, ideas and experiences. According to the spiritual traditions of India, God represents specific, defined qualities which are cosmic in nature: the quality of evolving consciousness and evolving energy in coexistence. The word ‘brahman’ is derived from the Sanskrit root *brihn*, which means to grow or expand. Therefore, *Brahman* means the expanding, evolving and developing consciousness and energy. That is the concept of God in the spiritual traditions of India, and the statement, *Prajnanam Brahman*, must be seen in this context.

You and your Father

The experience of God is unique to every individual. What you experience as God may not necessarily be the right or true form of God. A man was walking one day in a forest where he saw a chameleon sitting on a rock, sunning itself. It was green in colour at that time. Another person came and saw the chameleon sunning itself, but now its colour was brown. After some time, a third person came walking and saw the chameleon which was now purple in colour. The three met in the evening and began to discuss their experiences. One said, “I saw a chameleon today, which was green.” The second person said, “I didn’t see any green chameleon.

The chameleon was brown, not green.” The third person said, “Both of you are wrong. The chameleon that I saw was purple.” For each of these individuals, the experience of the chameleon was unique: green, brown and purple. In the same way, realizing God is unique to every individual.

What I visualize and see as Rama, Christ or my guru may not be applicable to you. Each individual has a unique identification with the mind, and that is what turns a spiritual experience into a religious notion. The spiritual experience is of the essence; it is a combination or collection of specific and defined qualities which are unique in creation. That is Brahman, consciousness which is not dormant, but active and evolving. This activity and evolution takes place because of the *shakti tattwa*, the energy element in the consciousness. Thus, consciousness and energy together are identified as Brahman.

The same cosmic consciousness and energy also exist in the individual unit of body and consciousness. This idea can be understood with an example. You are born out of union between your parents. As you grow up, certain characteristics of your parents are noticeable in you. You may have your father’s nose and ears, your mother’s eyes and mouth, and so on. Although you are not a carbon copy of your parents, a certain resemblance is there. In the same way, you are not a carbon copy of God, but a certain resemblance is there in the form of qualities which you hold within. The scriptures say that the essential nature of every individual is luminous and sattwic. That is what allows you to experience the divinity in you. That is the character which you have to discover in life, not tamas and not rajas. Your consciousness must be transformed from a tamasic condition to a sattwic condition.

The world is dominated by tamo guna and rajo guna and the individual soul is also subject to their influence. You have received them in heritage from Maya. God endowed you with sattwa, but you are not able to experience it. Whereas Maya endowed you with tamas and you experience it all the time.

This is because tamo guna is gross and sattwa guna is subtle. Tamas is gross, this body is gross, this world is gross, objects are gross. The object-oriented inclination is also gross, as it connects with a material object. Sattwa guna is subtle, which no one can see, just as you cannot see your mind but you experience it. You can see the body and experience it, but can you see the mind? All the same, the mind is experienced just like the body is experienced.

Name and form are aspects of tamo guna. The world is an aspect of tamas and so are sense objects. The spiritual inclination is the beginning of sattwa. Where do sattwa, rajas and tamas begin? Tamas is experienced when lethargy, craving, repulsion, envy, deception, etc. enter the mind. Rajas is indicated by action, the running around that you do, desire, ambition, the effort to fulfil desires. Rajo guna begins with *kriya*, action. Sattwa is experienced when the consciousness



is still, steady and blissful and there is experience of contentment, joy and peace. The expression of sattwa is a state of peacefulness, equipoise and fullness.

In Brahman or the Supreme Self there is primacy of sattwa, and harmony of tamas and rajas. Due to the pre-eminence of sattwa, a different inner state is experienced. That experience is Brahman, and it contains both consciousness and energy.

The permutation and combination of energy and consciousness give rise to the gunas, and gunas attach the individual with the world. If there were no gunas, the self would forever reside in Brahman. Thus, *Prajnanam Brahman* refers to the understanding that the consciousness in you is Brahman. This has also been indicated in the shanti mantra of *Ishavasya Upanishad*:

*Om Poornamadah poornamidam poornaat poornamudachyate.
Poornasya poornamadaya poornamevavashishyate.*

That is full, this is full. From full the full is taken, the full has come. If you remove the full from the full, the full alone remains.

Fullness has been considered the basis, aim and culmination of life here. This has been further explained (v. 1):

Isha vasyamidam sarvam yatkincha jagatyam jagat.

All this, whatever moves in this universe, is indwelled by Isha.

The world is the residence of God or Brahman, but where do people search for that Brahman? They search in form, name and quality. Form is the shape that you have received; it is tamo guna. Name is that with which you are identified; it is rajo guna. The element which holds qualities in itself is sattwa guna. When you try to know Brahman through name and form, the connection that you form with that Supreme Spirit remains material, not spiritual. In the material connection with God, there is only wheeling and dealing, not surrender. Why do you go to a temple? Do

you surrender yourself when you are there or do you try to transact a deal, “You do this for me and I will do that for you”? It is when you transcend this mentality that the *gunas* are also transcended. That is when the seeds of faith and surrender are sown in life and no desires remain. That is the state of a realized yogi. To arrive at it, one has to climb step by step, and the first is knowing the attachments that cause your downfall and become a hindrance in your growth. It is knowing the state of your consciousness. This is the beginning of jnana yoga.

The doorway to consciousness

The way to access the consciousness is through *buddhi*. Not through *manas*, not through *chitta*, not through *ahamkara*. *Buddhi* allows you to analyze, observe, and know the right from the wrong. The quality of discrimination is predominant in *buddhi*, and discrimination is the catalyst for transformation in life.

With the first mahavakya, “Consciousness is Brahman”, begins the enquiry. You have been given a *sutra*, an aphorism, and now you need to think about it. Relate that *sutra* with your own experience, moods of consciousness and mind. If consciousness is Brahman, do you consider your desires to be Brahman too? Do you consider your need for love and being wanted Brahman too? No. These are not Brahman. To understand why, revert to the previous point: *tamas*.

If you have been able to attain the state of *sattwa*, then you can say, “Even my thoughts are Brahman.” Sri Swamiji says, “I receive instructions. I receive guidance on a regular basis.” When *sattwa* becomes pre-eminent, then such perceptions can take place. One becomes the channel of that higher force. In its absence, you have to begin the understanding of your basic nature in terms of mind and consciousness. Therefore, the practice of jnana yoga begins not with the question, “Who am I?” but with meditation, *dhyana*, to know the traits of the mind which have to be contained, channelled and sublimated.

Jnana yoga in *Tantroktam Devi Suktam*

In the step-down process from the cosmic consciousness to individual existence, the grossest state is where the senses are totally extroverted, and one identifies with one's cravings. This is indicated in the *Tantroktam Devi Suktam* with a beautiful sequence:

Ya devi sarvabhooteshu chetanetyabhidhiyate
Ya devi sarvabhooteshu buddhiroopena samsthitha
Ya devi sarvabhooteshu nidraropena samsthitha
Ya devi sarvabhooteshu kshudharopena samsthitha.

The first form of Devi, the underlying principle in the coming into being of manifest creation, is *chetanetyabhidhiyate*, consciousness. The second is *buddhiroopena samsthitha*, the faculty of knowing. The third is *nidraropena samsthitha*, sleep, and the fourth is *kshudharopena samsthitha*, craving. This is essentially the subject of jnana yoga. The all-pervasive consciousness manifests in life in the form of buddhi, contained consciousness. As you are confined to the body of the senses and the mind is attached to sense objects, there is *nidra*, sleep.

What happens in sleep? You don't know that you exist. You are not aware of time, space or object. Eight hours of sleep pass by very fast. When you wake up, you again connect with the world of time, space and object. Buddhi is disconnected from its source in *nidra* and you live in a world of fantasy as you dream. Similarly, while you exist in this world you forget that you were awake once and you are living this dream, that you are creating your own reality, environment and associations. *Nidra* makes you forget your true nature and you identify with what you are experiencing at that particular moment in the dream state. You may be dreaming of someone chasing you with a knife. You are running, sweating and panting in fear. When you wake up, you say, "Thank God it was only a dream. Nobody is chasing me. I am comfortable in my bed." In the same manner, you create your associations in this world: friend, husband, wife,

child, and so on. On account of that, you suffer. When you wake up from this nidra after death, you say, “Thank God, that was only a dream. That is not me.”

After nidra comes *kshudha*, craving. When you forget your true self and are awake in your dream, you are awake in the world of senses. At that time, craving manifests. Without craving or desire, you cannot function in this world.

Now, reverse the process. Observe the craving. What is the craving for? Comfort, name, fame, status, property, prosperity, peace? Whatever it may be, discover that craving. Start with craving because it connects you with the world. Desires, passions and needs connect you with the world. If there was no desire, no need, no passion, if there was nothing, would you be connected to the world? No. Thus, craving has to be observed, analyzed and categorized. What is your social craving? What is your personal craving? What is your craving with regard to your family? What is your craving with regard to your ambitions? Define all that.



Next, nidra must be overcome. You need to wake up from the dream of identifying with the senses and sense objects. Ask yourself, “Is this my role in life: to identify with the senses and sense objects and run after them to satisfy my greed?” One can overcome nidra by becoming the *drashta*, observer. One can modify the dream by lucid dreaming. You can say to yourself in the dream, “This is only a dream. I will turn back and fight my assailant.” You can modify the dream. In the same manner, once you have categorized all your cravings, you can come out of the sensorial, material hypnosis which is due to sleep and gross identification. This process begins with meditation.

Method of jnana: dhyana

Meditation has to be understood in the right perspective and context. The one word ‘meditation’ contains many different ideas, stages, experiences and attainments within it. What is the starting point of meditation which can lead to jnana yoga?

Stage one: For everyone, the starting point, focus and aim of meditation in the first stage is physical stability. Those who have practised the meditative process sequentially, according to the Bihar Yoga tradition, will know that the first practice of meditation that is taught is *kaya sthairyam*. Many people think, “It is only a practice to become quiet and still, but I want to meditate.” They forget an important factor: concentration cannot be achieved without stilling the senses, and the senses are not mental, but physical. Therefore, *kaya sthairyam*, stillness of body, stillness of sensory input and output, is the first step in meditation.

You may be able to sit quietly for five or ten minutes, but the nature of the senses is such that disturbance will be created in that state of stillness and silence. You will allow yourself to be disturbed; you will not be able to resist the disturbance. I haven’t come across anybody who can resist the mental disturbance. Anxiety overpowers the mind. Frustration, guilt and desires overpower the mind. These

are mental dissipations and distractions which break the harmony and peace of mind, and nobody can resist them. Everybody falls prey to anxiety, fears, inhibitions, complexes, frustrations, depressions and elations. This means only one thing: nobody has perfected *kaya sthairyam*.

How can you resist, observe and quieten the sensorial and physical distractions? Since the term *kaya sthairyam* means stillness of body, people think, “If I sit still, I am practising *kaya sthairyam*.” You do not perfect *kaya sthairyam* by sitting still; it is the stillness of the senses that must be attained. The senses continuously move towards their gratification and identify with sense objects. That craving and need has to stop. Therefore, the first stage of meditation is stilling the senses and the interaction of the senses with sense objects. That is known as *kaya sthairyam*.

Stage two: After having perfected *kaya sthairyam*, you come to the mind. In meditation, the mind has to be stilled. The chatter of thoughts has to be stopped, refused and diminished. The cravings and expectations have to be diminished. As you are able to gain more control over your mental behaviour, you will discover that the mental chatter gradually reduces. That is an indication of progress. Today, you might be disturbed by a hundred thoughts. Tomorrow, only ten will come. That is when you know that you are walking on the right path. As the *vasanas*, passions, lessen, as the thoughts lessen, there is less distraction and disturbance in the mind and more stillness, silence and peace. In this stage, you are searching for that centre within where you experience peace.

One experiences peace only when one contemplates on the Supreme Element. Try it. Begin contemplating on something, your family or your work. The moment you start thinking, the mind becomes restless, thoughts begin to come at great speed, and those thoughts are about your problems, desires, attachments and wishes. However, when you meditate on guru or God, the mind does not become restless. It feels as if the mind has become centred on guru

or God and no worldly thoughts come. A feeling of faith manifests. Therefore, one has to discover that centre within where one can fix one's mind and quieten the chatter of the mind. That is the second stage of meditation.

Stage three: In the third stage of meditation, you become the drashta, the observer. Without becoming the observer, you cannot walk further. You have to know what you are going to do and where you are going to walk. The drashta holds the map of the journey in his hands, because that is a natural and spontaneous attainment of drashta-hood, of becoming the observer.

Until a few years ago, those who wanted to undertake long journeys would go to the Automobile Association. The representative there would help plan out the route by marking it with a highlighter on a map. As you held out the marked map, you saw your route clearly defined as well as all the other lanes and by-lanes which you need not take. You became the drashta of your path. When you hold the map in your hand, you automatically become the drashta of your path, "I have to go through only the highlighted road, as it will take me to my destination." That is the third state of meditation. After having stilled the mental behaviours, you become the drashta.

Being the drashta means that if there is joy, fine, but you are not that joy. You are the observer of the joy. If there is pain, let it be, you are not experiencing it, you are observing it. In this way, no matter what circumstance you go through, you become its observer. Being the drashta, you watch all the experiences that are taking place in the manas, chitta, buddhi and ahamkara. You watch which of them is binding you and which is freeing you. Which desire is binding you to the world and which is freeing you? Which thought is attaching you to the world of senses and which thought is freeing you from them? Until the drashta bhava manifests, you cannot make such a decision. The drashta bhava brings both *viveka*, discrimination, and *vairagya*, non-attachment. Therefore, in the third step you have to awaken the drashta bhava. You

have to enhance the positive thoughts and samskaras which bring about human evolution and get rid of the unnecessary thoughts and samskaras which manifest incessantly. Your path is now clearly outlined, as all the dissipations of the mind have stopped.

Stage four: In the fourth stage, you start fine-tuning yourself. This is where the process of jnana yoga begins. The body is still, the senses



are still, the mind is still, the disturbed state of the mind has been quietened, you have become the drashta and made the appropriate use of viveka and vairagya. After stilling the senses, stilling the mental chatter and becoming the observer of your mental processes, you consciously alter your mental behaviour. You apply your power of discernment, *viveka shakti*, to sift the appropriate from the inappropriate and then apply your power of non-attachment, *vairagya shakti*, to detach from the negative and move towards the positive. In this way, slowly, the percentage of tamas and rajas reduces and that of sattwa enhances.

Now begins the contemplation: Who am I? In this contemplation, the mahavakya that you focus on is *Prajnanam Brahman* – “This consciousness is Brahman, this whole life is Brahman, I am surrounded by Brahman, I am surrounded by that Supreme Element.” We are surrounded by that Supreme Element just as a fish is surrounded by water, but does not know that it is living in water. We are surrounded by air and know that is so due to our intelligence, but we would not know it if we did not possess intelligence. How would you then know that you are surrounded by something called air? In the same way that

air pervades the entire earth, an element subtler than air is the Ishwara tattwa, Paramatma tattwa, Brahma tattwa. It is also all-pervading like air. Air is not Indian, American, Chinese or Russian; it is all-pervading. In the same way, the Supreme Spirit is not Indian, Chinese, American, European or African; it is all-pervading.

That Supreme Element is what you need to search for. The process of connecting with it begins with the thinking, “The Supreme Element is all pervading. It is within me, it is in my consciousness and I am a part of it. I am not the body, nor the experiences associated with the body. I am the conscious element and that conscious element is prajna.”

Prajna means awakened intellect or awakened discrimination. In that awakened state, you are able to establish a connection with God. But this God is not a physical entity which is manifest; it is formless. Brahman means formless God, a combination of consciousness and energy. When this jnana or understanding takes over the consciousness, the whole world appears as a playground. You realize that just as children go to a park and play, you have come to this earth to play with wealth, family and job.

Stage five: When you go on contemplating the above, you reach the fifth stage of meditation where you perceive the whole world as manifestation of the Supreme Spirit. You no longer see yourself as separate from God. Right now, there is an experience of duality, “Here is me and there is God.” ‘My’ experiences take place in a narrow field and the God experience takes place in an expansive field. There is *dwaita bhava*: “I am here and I am contemplating my object of worship, my ishta or my God, my Brahma.” By contemplating in this way for a long time, you begin to feel *Sarvam khalvidam Brahman* – “All is Brahman”. Now comes the second mahavakya: *Aham Brahmasmi*.

The second mahavakya is an experience of *advaita*, non-duality. There are always problems in duality, whereas there is peace in non-duality. Take the example of religions. Every religion says, “This is it.” A Hindu will say, “This is the

truth.” A Muslim will say, “This is the truth” and a Christian will say, “This is the truth.” No one will say, “That is also the truth.” When you highlight only one thing, that which you are connected with, it represents *dwaita*. You think that what you are seeing and experiencing is the only reality. However, if you say, “That is also true,” it becomes an accepting statement. “This is true and that is also true. We accept both.” At this point, all differences come to an end. When there is acceptance, differences cease to be.

Through meditation, you come to the point where, after transcending the mind, you begin to experience the totality of consciousness. In that experience of totality of consciousness, you begin to experience and contemplate upon the transcendental or divine nature. That is when you realize that consciousness is Brahman.

The first mahavakya, *Prajnanam Brahman*, is called ‘lakshana vakya’. *Vakya* means statement or sentence and *lakshana*, in this context, means quality. There are two meanings of the word lakshana: symptom and quality. In this context, it means quality. The quality of consciousness is Brahman. Therefore, reflect on that. Reflect on that quality of consciousness which is unbound by the fetters of *maya* and *avidya*, delusion and ignorance. That luminous state of consciousness is Brahman.

The luminous state of consciousness is an outcome of wisdom, of knowledge becoming an integral part of consciousness. When consciousness and knowledge become one and there is no distinction between the two, inner luminosity is experienced. That is *prajna*. That inner luminosity is known as the transcendental, divine or godly luminosity, or Brahman. That is what you discover in the fifth stage of meditation. After you have modified and fine-tuned the expressions and behaviour patterns of the mind, consciousness, energy, lifestyle, environment, family, routine, and acquired a state of balance, you are able to practise this stage. Thus, meditation is actually the method by which one can perfect jnana yoga.

From understanding to experience

Once you are even partially established in the understanding of “Consciousness is Brahman”, the second statement comes into play. It is known as ‘anusandhana vakya’. *Vakya* is sentence and *anusandhana* is enquiry. That sentence is: *Aham Brahma Asmi* – “I am that Supreme Consciousness.” You have to enquire on this statement. First, you realize that “Consciousness is Brahman”, and by cultivating identification with that consciousness comes the realization, “I am that Brahman.” Anusandhana, enquiry, takes place.

Meditation, therefore, leads to the attainment of the final stage of jnana yoga. It leads to an awareness of your own consciousness and the realization that this consciousness is transcendental. When you merge with that experience, you realize that you have become that, “I am that. I am Brahman.” This is not abstract philosophy; rather, it is a practical approach and method to discover one’s true nature.

There is a statement in the *Yoga Sutras*:

Tadaa drastuh swaroope avasthaanam.

Then the seer is established in his own true nature.

What is the meaning of this statement? How do you know what your true nature is? If you know what your true nature is, why are you not that?

Becoming free

You are not that because you do not know what your true nature is. If you knew it, you would be living that. There is a story about Hanuman in the *Ramayana*. He had all the powers, but he did not know that. He was sitting by the ocean, wondering how the grand body of water could possibly be crossed. He had the power to cross it, but he did not know it. Jamavant came to him and said, “You have the ability. You can cross it.” This indicates that someone has to intervene to remind you what your true nature is, and that person is the guru.

There is a story about a bird-catcher, the king of doves and a rat. Once there stood a large banyan tree just outside a city. Many birds lived in that tree. One day, a bird-catcher came to the tree and scattered shiny white grains on the ground, spread his net over them, and hid in the bushes some distance away.

Now, the king of the birds was a crow. He understood what the hunter was doing, and told all the birds not to touch the grains.



Soon, a flock of doves flew in to the tree. Not paying heed to the words of the crow, they descended to the ground and were, of course, caught in the net. The hunter was overjoyed to see the whole flock in his net and started to walk towards it.

The leader of the flock was an old dove. Seeing the state of his flock, he said to them, “Don’t be afraid. Only our feet are caught in the net, not our wings. Hold fast to your willpower and when I say ‘Cool!’ we will all fly together, lifting the net.” The flock did as told, and before the hunter could get to them, they were all in the air, flapping their wings in harmony.

Up in the sky, the leader said, “We will go to my friend the rat. He will bite through the mesh and free us all.” When the rat saw them in this state, he asked, “What happened?” The leader dove replied, “My love for food did this to my flock.” The rat said, “But your buddhi helped you reach me. Now let me do the rest.” Soon, the rat destroyed the mesh, biting it off bit by bit, and all the doves were free once more.

What does this story indicate?

In your desire to fulfil your sensory needs, you are unmindful of the pitfalls and even ignore good advice. But when caught in a net, some part of you still remains free. If you hold on to it, apply your will, pull together all your capabilities and use your intelligence, you can find a way out. Yet, the real freedom is attained only with the help of someone who truly knows the nature of the bondage, and can release you from it, little by little, until you are free in every way.

The story is apt, illustrating the application of buddhi and the intervention of guru. The bird-catcher throws the net on the ground where he has spread grains. That is the world, that is the net of maya. Birds, the free spirits, look at the grain, the sense objects, and are attracted to it. They are attracted to food and come down. Due to their craving, greed and the supposed need, they are caught. Their feet become entangled in the web and they consider themselves helpless. However, the leader has an idea. The leader of any group is a person who has one percent more intelligence than the others. It is natural that such a person will become the leader.

The leader of the birds says, "Look, our feet are caught, but our wings are not bound. We can use the wings. If we all flap our wings together, we can fly away, along with the net – until we find somebody who can free us from the net." The followers agree. Just as the bird-catcher is coming to get them, they all flap their wings and fly off with the net. Even in life, it is possible to fly from a situation, but you carry the net with you; you are still bound. How to be free from the net? With the help of the rat. The rat is the guru. It is a low-profile animal. Sri Swamiji says that gurus should keep a low profile, as a high profile brings arrogance and enforces the ego. Many think that gurudom will bring them name, fame and prosperity in the world and they run after all these things. They no longer pursue a spiritual aim, but run after material aims. Therefore, gurus should always remain low-profile beings like the rat: do the work and go back to your hole. You do not even know that the rat came in the night and ate away the leftovers in your kitchen. In the morning, you find the leftovers finished. The

guru does the same thing. When you sleep, he enters your mind and nibbles away at your bonds. When you wake up, you find that all the strings have been cut. The rat was the guru who came and cut away the bonds of the net from the doves' feet and freed them all.

It was the application of intelligence which allowed the doves to fly away from the area where they were going to be caught and killed, to another place where the guru was waiting to nibble the strings away from their feet. This applies in life too. You are caught up in the net of maya, hypnotized by the sensorial world, the luxuries and comforts, and desiring everything that exists to become happy. Then, in search of peace and freedom, you come to the guru. At that moment, the guru says, "You have applied your buddhi and have flown away from that situation where you were bound and suffering. Now, I will nibble away your bondage." The last binding from the feet is released by the guru; the wings are always free.

Shankaracharya in *Aparokshanubhuti* says, "Just as a bird needs two wings to fly, every human being needs two things: *viveka* and *vairagya*." The two wings of a human being are *viveka* and *vairagya*, discrimination and non-attachment. You can flap these two wings to fly, but ultimately it is the guru who will free you from the bondage of life, death and maya.



Sadhana of Mahavakyas

From Duality to Unity

14 May 2011

The inherent faculty of *buddhi*, or intelligence, is the catalyst which allows one to connect with one's inner higher nature. It is also the catalyst for the connection with the external, material world, the world of senses and sense objects. Yogis say that an attempt must be made to move buddhi away from the material towards the transcendental. This movement of buddhi from the material dimension of involvement and identification to a transcendental state of existence is the purpose of jnana yoga.

Jnana yoga is defined by many as the yoga of enquiry, of asking the questions, "Who am I?" "What is my true nature?" "How can I discover that?" "How can I become established in that?" It is defined as a process of enquiring and realizing what one is. This enquiry is not associated with material life; rather, it is associated with spiritual life.

From the perspective of yoga, there are two forms of buddhi: the normal sensorial intellect and the special intuitive intellect. The first is that which associates with the world and directs the mental forces to identify with the senses and sense objects. It directs the mental forces to crave and desire that which can presumably provide external happiness, fulfilment and contentment. This search, involvement or interaction of buddhi is external. The more buddhi becomes involved in the outer dimension, the more it becomes entangled in the web of maya and attachment, and the mind becomes gross.

The mind becomes extremely rajasic and tamasic due to the cravings that manifest through the influence of buddhi, “I desire this. I want this. This is my need.” All this is being told to you by your buddhi. You respond to those instructions by attaching yourself with sense objects. The *manas*, mind, only becomes the medium to connect you with sense objects and to motivate you to work towards the fulfilment of desires and attainment of sense objects. This form of buddhi is what you live with throughout your life, remaining engrossed and involved in the material dimension.

When buddhi is involved with sense objects, the mind remains disturbed and desires continue to take birth in the mind. Desire or *vasana* has been called *sagarbha*, ever-pregnant, as a desire always contains the embryo of another desire in it. In the womb of every desire is nurtured the seed of yet another desire. As soon as the first is satisfied, the second replaces it. There is no end to desire. That is why desires always make the mind tumultuous, dissipated and disturbed. This leads to a search for peace, happiness and contentment, so you may be free of that disturbed state. However, since your intellect is extroverted, the search for peace, happiness and wholeness is in the external world.

Beginning of jnana yoga: observing the present

The role of buddhi is much more than interaction with the world. It is the tool which can connect you with your own essential inner nature or spirit. A coin has two sides. When you look at the world, you are looking at one side of the coin and when you look inwards, you are looking at the other side of the coin. When you become one-pointed and quieten every kind of restlessness, whether physical, mental or sensorial, you can look inwards. That is how the concept of jnana yoga developed.

If buddhi is to be connected with your real and essential nature, you have to know what nature it is identifying with at present. Therefore, the journey into jnana yoga begins with observing the present, and not by thinking about an abstract



idea or statement which, in your present state of mind, does not have any relevance.

The practice of jnana yoga begins with meditation. It is a process which takes you through different levels of mental awareness, and perfection of the behaviour of the mind. People think that meditation is a tool to experience something deeper within. That is true only at a certain stage of meditation. In the initial stages, the role of meditation is to enhance the ability to control, manage and guide the behaviour of the senses, mind, intellect and emotions. The method of meditation has to take you through these different stages of enhanced awareness of the self before you enter into contemplative meditation.

Jnana yoga is contemplative meditation, but in the sequential process of meditation, it is a very distant step. It is not something that you can start with, since you do not have the capacity to contemplate. You do not have the capacity to think in the correct manner due to the absence of *viveka*, discrimination. What will you think of? You will think your normal thoughts. There will not be any change in your mental responses and behaviours even in meditation, in the absence of *viveka* and *vairagya*. The same thoughts that come

to you now will continue to come even during meditation. The only difference will be that now you are sitting with your eyes open and then you will sit with your eyes closed. The train or pattern of thoughts, emotions, sentiments, samskaras and karmas will be the same, unless you are able to develop the faculty of discrimination and non-attachment. These are the two attributes which allow the mind to disconnect from its intense and deep identification with sense objects. Discrimination is a state of mind which allows one to know what is appropriate and inappropriate, what is true and untrue. This faculty is a must in order to progress in meditation. In its absence, you will not be able to know whether what you are experiencing is your own creation, or the surfacing of something inherent from within.

Meditation, therefore, is not a process of sitting with eyes closed, but cultivating specific areas of the mind, which allow you to know the mind and guide its forces. Your mind has not been trained in this manner; therefore, you are not able to focus, concentrate, still the agitations of the nerves, the body, the senses, the mind, or any other aspect of your nature. Meditation has to be understood as a progressive sadhana, which allows you to explore your own potential and convert the normal, material and gross buddhi to wisdom and knowledge, which is expressed in life naturally and spontaneously.

Practising the sequential path

There are many people who meditate for extended periods of time over years. Despite their achievement in meditation, they are unable to control their responses and reactions which are emotional, sensual, intellectual and sensorial. Nothing changes in them except for the creation of a routine: sitting for twenty minutes with eyes closed once in the course of the day. Beyond that, there is no other change in the personality or the mind, as they did not follow the sequence. They tried to practise contemplative meditation without covering the basics. It is like presuming that if you learn to read and write, you can acquire a degree. It is definitely possible to have

attainments through meditation; there are no two opinions on that. However, just as one needs to work hard to acquire a degree and move from level to level of education, one has to practise sadhana, work hard, in meditation also. You cannot just close your eyes and enter into a contemplative state by thinking that you are doing so. Fire does not turn into ice just by thinking about it. That is why there is no advancement or achievement in such meditation. Sometimes it is enjoyable and sometimes frustrating. You feel you are not going anywhere, and then you come to the guru and say, “What is happening to me? I cannot understand it. I am not progressing.” The guru says, “Go back to the basics.” Hearing this, you think the guru does not know anything about meditation. You are being asked to go back to the basics when you have been practising meditation for thirty years!

That is everyone’s shortcoming. You are unable to see or understand the need to follow a sequence. You think, “I don’t need to follow the sequence, I can jump ahead.” Everybody thinks they are better than others and they don’t need to follow the basics. That is why, despite the inputs of spiritual traditions, people are not able to transform themselves. The scriptures say that the *vishayakara vritti*, object-oriented inclination, has to be transformed and the *brahmi vritti*, spiritual inclination, has to be cultivated. Attainment of brahmi vritti is the purpose of jnana yoga.

Brahmi vritti is the state where the inherent tendency to attach with sense objects is freed of the sense objects, the yearning attached to desires is freed of the desires, the thoughts that are attached with ambitions are freed from the ambitions. This is the first step. Thereafter, the process of thinking begins. A question arises, “Who am I? People know me by such and such name. I know that I am five feet and eleven inches tall. I know that this is my nature, my character, my yearning, my desire, my strength, my weakness.” All these need to be understood in the process of thinking.

After you have understood yourself in this manner, then the higher thoughts begin. Initially, if you try to catch a

higher thought, you will not be able to do so, as the lower thoughts are more powerful and they do not allow you to connect with the higher thought. I've given the example of mantra japa. In the five or ten minutes that it takes you to complete your japa, how many times does the mind wander away? You have to pull it back again and again, and connect it with the mantra. Therefore, first acquire a one-pointed mind. The attainment of jnana yoga will come later. That is why *dhyana*, meditation, has been considered the method or sadhana of jnana yoga.

Before cultivating a higher thought, understand yourself and get rid of the gross conditions. Otherwise, a higher thought may come, but the gross thoughts will again drag the mind down to the earthly level. Take the example of a visit to a temple. When you go to a temple, you are required to leave your shoes outside. Now, when you bow before the deity, the higher thought is the connection with the spiritual principle there, but the lower thought is that of your shoes. You are bowing your head before the image in the temple, but the image, symbol and memory on your mental screen is that of your shoes. Instead of the feet of the deity, you are actually thinking of your shoes. Am I wrong? That is what happens. That is the average state of mind. A useless thought will divert the mind from its focus. Compared to a pure thought, a useless thought will more easily divert the mind. That is why in the system of dhyana, the first step is restraint of the senses. The first purpose of meditation is: stillness of the senses. This sequence of meditation has to be drilled into everyone.

1. *Stilling the senses*: The first stage of meditation is control over the senses and sense organs. That is the first condition or requirement of meditation: developing the ability to stop the senses from moving and holding them fixed in one point of awareness and attention. This is known as *kaya sthairyam*. To come to this point, you have to have a good understanding of how your body responds, how the senses respond and how the mind responds to the senses. Only then you will be able to stop the movement and identification of the senses. Here,

certain practices of raja yoga may be used. For instance, the practice of pratyahara allows you to disconnect from the outer world, the outer involvement and association, and become fixed internally, within. Such sensory stillness must be attained in the initial stages of meditation.

This is the ABCD of meditation. Years ago, when I used to travel to different countries and give meditation classes, people would come up and say, “Swamiji, today for the first time I felt my big toe.” I found that amusing, but it was definitely an attainment for them. They would say, “Swamiji, for the first time today I became aware of my body. I became aware of my knee, I visualized my ankle.” This process of knowing oneself is not just physical, but also sensorial. You have to become aware of the exchange of the senses with the world. Only then you will be able to quieten the senses.

2. *Stilling the mind*: Then you come to the next stage: stilling the agitations, fluctuations and modifications of the mind. The agitations and fluctuations of the mind have to be known, as they are subtle and intense, and can prompt you to act in a particular manner. This management of the mental vrittis and isolating the mind from its sources of pain and pleasure, happiness and suffering, and giving it the experience of total peace, harmony and equilibrium is the focus of the second stage of meditation.

Slowly and gradually, the mind is connected and fixed on the object of concentration, whether symbol, mantra or breath. You know the story of Guru Dronacharya’s test of his students, the Kaurava and Pandava cousins. One by one, he called each student, gave him an arrow and said, “There is a clay bird on that tree. You have to shoot the bird’s eye.” When the student strung the bow and took his aim, the guru asked, “What do you see?” The student replied, “I see the tree, I see you, I see my cousins, I see the sky.” Dronacharya said, “Put down your bow and arrow.” There were one hundred and five brothers. To one hundred and four of them, he said, “Put down your bow and arrow.” At the end came Arjuna’s turn. He also strung the bow and was asked the same question. He replied, “I see the eye

of the bird, nothing else.” Dronacharya deliberately quizzed Arjuna, “Do you not see the tree? The leaves? The sky?” Arjuna replied, “No.” Dronacharya said, “Shoot the arrow.” The arrow went straight and hit the bird’s eye.

This is one-pointedness. Closing the eyes and separating yourself from the world is not one-pointedness. Even an ostrich buries its face in the sand and thinks that no one is able to see it. You practise dhyana in the same way. You close the eyes and think that you have left the world behind. You cannot lose the world by closing the eyes, but remaining one-pointed, even with eyes open, is real meditation. That is when you are freed of external objects.

There is a story about Shukadeva, son of Rishi Vyasa. He was sent to the court of King Janaka by his father. Upon



arriving there, he found the court in progress in all its opulence. Shukadeva said to Janaka, "My father has sent me to you for knowledge, but I don't understand what you can teach me. You are a sensualist. Your palace is equipped with every kind of comfort. Dancers are performing, musicians are playing, the kingdom is being run, riches are coming in, wealth is being distributed, every worldly activity is going on. What will you teach me?" The king said, "Look, I am busy right now. Why don't you come a little later? In the meantime, you can have a tour of the city." Shukadeva agreed and prepared to leave. The king said, "Wait a moment. Two of my bodyguards will accompany you." Shukadeva was very happy. For the first time he was going to be escorted by bodyguards, Z-category protection! The king said, "Just one more thing. You have to put a vessel of water on your head and then tour the city. If even one drop of water spills out of it, my bodyguards will behead you. Now go."

Shukadeva left. A celebration was underway in the city. Drums were beating, public criers were shouting announcements, flowers were raining, perfume was being sprayed, incense was burning, people were dancing, the shops were selling sweets and delicacies, children were playing. For four hours Shukadeva toured the city and then returned to the court. Carefully, he put the vessel of water down from his head.

Janaka asked, "So did you tour the city?" "Yes," replied Shukadeva. The king quizzed, "How did you like the city? How were the decorations? How were the celebrations? Did you see everything?" Shukadeva said, "What are you saying! I saw none of that." The king said, "Then what were you doing for four hours? Were you not aware of all the activity that was going on around you?" Shukadeva replied, "No, I was not aware of anything. You had placed such a condition that I could only be aware of the vessel on my head and making sure that no drop spilled out of it. I did not see anything else." Janaka said, "You have received the learning that you came for. Now you may go." Shukadeva was stunned.

He asked, “What do you mean?” The king said, “I told you what I had to tell you. You can be free from the world even while you are in it. I perform my work as duty, but I am not attached to it. Look above my throne.” Shukadeva looked and saw several spears hanging by a single thread of horse hair. Surprised, Shukadeva said, “Aren’t they dangerous?” The king replied, “They would seem dangerous to people, but I have them there so I may remain aware that a spear can fall on me at any time. I always undertake my activities with the awareness that this may be my last moment, and I never leave anything for the next day.”

Thus, Shukadeva received two lessons: one, if you can remain one-pointed even while living in the world, it will not influence you; and two, never procrastinate. This is the second state of dhyana in which the mind has been caught or restrained. When the dissipated thoughts, emotions and tendencies are slowly quietened in the second state of dhyana, then follows the third state.

3. *Secret of the drashta bhava*: The third stage of meditation is cultivating the *sakshi bhava* or *drashta bhava*, the witnessing attitude or the ability of observation. Drashta bhava is the ability to observe oneself and maintain that state of awareness continuously for a long time. It is the state where you are able to say, “I am observing myself, I am observing my behaviour, I am the witness of my karmas, I am the witness of my thoughts, I am the witness of my ambitions, I am the witness of every experience of mine.” Again, the mind has to be trained to observe itself. There is a trick here. When you think, “I want to become quiet”, who is the one doing the thinking? It is the mind that is thinking. It is the same mind which is agitated and which desires peace and quietness. It seems to be a paradox that the nature of the mind is to be active and move all the time, but the desire of mind is to be still. The nature of the mind is to continuously flow, but the desire of the mind is to be still.

You have to pick up on the desire of the mind, not the nature of the mind. That is the secret. If you identify



with the mental movement, you will follow the trains of thought, wherever they take you. If you identify with the idea of peace, hold yourself back and remain connected to that idea. You can observe the movement of the mind by being at one place. That is the drashta bhava or sakshi bhava. When you become the sakshi, the observer of yourself, and that faculty of observation is continuous, constant and does not dissipate or fluctuate, then you become centred. Your mind becomes centred and there is an experience of peace and harmony.

Developing the sakshi bhava is the entry ticket to jnana yoga. You begin with dhyana to attain jnana. The sakshi bhava is the third stage of dhyana and the first stage of jnana yoga. With the help of the witnessing attitude, gradually you learn to make good use of *viveka buddhi*, the discriminating faculty of the intellect, and *vairagya buddhi*, the non-attaching faculty of the intellect. These are the two weapons of the intellect just as you have two feet. If you need to go anywhere, your two feet will take you the distance. In the same way, if the intellect has to travel somewhere, its two feet or two wings are viveka and vairagya. Buddhi walks or grows with the help of these two. When viveka and vairagya accompany buddhi, then you develop the intensity to be free of the vishyakara vritti and unite with the brahmi vritti.

When the drashta bhava comes into your life, viveka and vairagya become its base pillars. This allows you to remain free from the influences of the world. You act and perform in the world, you do not become divorced from the world,

but you remain free from the results and bondage of karmas. You undertake karma, but remain free. After practising the sakshi bhava for a sustained period, you become established in this attitude.

4. *Stepping into the realm of jnana*: Jnana allows you to explore your nature. It allows you to manage and guide the behaviour of the mind, buddhi and sentiments. After this gross nature has become balanced through the first three stages of meditation, then, in the fourth stage, jnana yoga begins. Now, the meditation becomes contemplative.

Sadhana of duality

What should you contemplate on? The Vedas have defined four statements which a sadhaka should contemplate on. An idea is inherent in all these statements. In each of them, you are seeing yourself as an individual and Brahman as another reality which you are trying to attain. All the statements constitute the individual and the aim or objective. *Aham* is 'me the individual'. *Aham Brahma Asmi* means, "I am that reality." Thus, "I am" is the individual self and the awareness of that reality connects you with it. You are aware of you as an individual self and of the higher reality or experience which you are trying to attain. There is always this separation in jnana yoga.

Although it is stated that the experience of duality ceases in jnana yoga, the duality has to be maintained in the process of perfecting the sadhana of jnana yoga. In the practice, you have to maintain duality: awareness of yourself as an individual unit and of the goal that you are trying to achieve, Brahman. Only when the duality is there that you will have the motivation and inspiration to attain something which is far from you. Therefore, all the statements indicate this separation: *Prajnanam Brahman* – consciousness and Brahman; *Aham Brahma Asmi* – I and Brahman; *Ayam Atma Brahma* – this soul and Brahman; *Tat Tvam Asi* – you and Brahman. In all the mahavakyas of the Vedas, there is a distinction between 'me' and 'Brahman'. This indicates that you have to make an effort to attain that awareness and realization.

First mahavakya: first point of contemplation

The first statement or idea is that consciousness is the transcendental reality: *Prajnanam Brahman* – “Consciousness is Brahman, the Supreme Self or the Supreme Consciousness.”

When the thought, “Consciousness is the Supreme Self”, is held in the mind, how do you understand the relationship of that consciousness with your consciousness? The consciousness which is in you is different from the transcendental and Supreme Consciousness. Therefore, why has it been said that consciousness is the Supreme Self? What is the reason? This is how the contemplation and enquiry begins.

When the elements of awareness and knowledge become one, then there is experience of prajna. Everyone has the faculty of awareness, *chetana*, and a certain degree of knowledge, *jnana*, but normally the two don't unite. When the two are united, then one attains prajna. Therefore, the state of prajna, the state of inner awareness, inner knowledge, in which one is the witness of every experience, is acquired through the union of the elements of knowledge and awareness.

Many times, the answer to enquiry comes not from thinking, but from reading and listening. If you had the ability to think in a manner that allowed you to reach into the essence of an idea, then jnana yoga would not be necessary, as your thinking process would follow a different course altogether. It is because you do not have the ability to think in such a manner that jnana yoga speaks of the concepts of consciousness and Brahman. You do not have the ability, as you are thinking in different directions all the time. You have never thought in terms of the transcendental self. Therefore, seek the answer to all enquiries in relation to the Supreme Consciousness and yourself from listening and reading, and not from your own mind.

Listening is *satsang*. Reading is *swadhyaya*. The purpose of satsang and swadhyaya, listening and reading, is to induce

certain thoughts in the mind, to introduce certain concepts in the mind, which allow one to know the difference between the normal responses of consciousness in the material dimension and the potential inherent in consciousness, so that one is uplifted in the spiritual dimension. This is where the first sadhana of jnana yoga takes place: knowing the difference between the behaviour of the normal consciousness and the transcendental consciousness. The responses in each are different. In the state of transcendence, the quality of the mind and consciousness is sattwic, pure, untainted, uninfluenced, harmonious and balanced. In the normal state, the consciousness is guided by tamo guna and rajo guna.

This is an indication and guideline; in normal life, the consciousness is guided by tamo guna and rajo guna, while in spiritual life the consciousness is guided by sattwa guna. This is the starting point for knowing the difference between the normal behaviour and the special behaviour of the mind, which leads to the realization that consciousness is the catalyst for changing itself. There is sublimation of thoughts, sentiments, ideas and efforts. Slowly and gradually, you are able to sublimate the normal behaviour into a transcendental, sattwic behaviour. That is the attainment and realization of the first contemplative thought of the Vedas, *Prajananam Brahman*.

Relate the state of your mind with the statement, *Prajananam Brahman*. If prajna is equated with the Supreme Self, then there is no suffering in it. Now observe yourself. You are experiencing pain. Who is the one experiencing the pain? If you are a part of that Supreme Spirit, then the power of sattwa exists in your life. That character exists in you. Use it. When you begin to use sattwa, then the thought that you are experiencing pain will reduce in intensity. You can separate yourself from the intimate connection that you had with the pain, due to which you experienced it. This is how the drashta bhava becomes useful. That is why the drashta bhava is the third stage of dhyana and the first step into jnana yoga.

When you observe the state of your mind and intellect and try to bring them into a state of equipoise, by becoming free of the vishyakara vritti and uniting with the brahmi vritti, it is necessary to know the difference between prajna, which is an awakened state of life, and nescience which is a dark state of life. There is karma taking place in both states, but when it takes place in darkness and nescience, you become bound to it. When the karma takes place in light, you are free of it, you are its witness; you are free of its results. This is the state of *Prajananam Brahman*; awareness and knowledge become one.

Second mahavakya: realization of inherent sattwa

When you are able to identify your sattwic nature and distance yourself from tamasic and rajasic behaviours, the sattwic nature becomes increasingly stronger in your life. In sattwa, there is no spot or taint; there is only purity. As the force of sattwa becomes stronger, you realize that you are that sattwa nature. You say, “I am that sattwa nature. I am the transcendental nature.” The statement which one has to contemplate on here is: *Aham Brahmasmi* – “I am that nature.” It takes time, but over a period, with that identification



intensifying, you become an epitome and example of sattwa. The day you become an example of the sattvic nature, you become Brahman. You become that. You say, “I’ve become that.” That is the second contemplative meditation of the Vedas: “I am that Supreme Self.” *Aham Brahmasmi*. “I have become that.”

Third mahavakya: seeing the world anew

When sattwa is established and you become that higher reality, *Aham Brahmasmi* – “I am that Brahman”, you begin to observe the world around you and see it differently.

There is a story. Once an aspirant came to a sadhu and said, “My intention in life is to attain God-realization. Please guide me on this path.” The sadhu replied, “It is too difficult and long a process. Instead, do something simpler that can help to improve your life-condition. Don’t try to search for God.” The aspirant insisted, “No. You are a siddha guru, a capable guru. You should be able to help me attain God-realization.” Ultimately, the guru gave up trying to convince the person and said, “All right, I will give you a mantra. Repeat that. When you begin to experience the power and quality of that mantra in your mind, you will know that you have attained realization.”

The mantra that the guru gave was, *Aham Brahmasmi*. The disciple sat down and began to chant, “*Aham Brahma Asmi, Aham Brahma Asmi, Aham Brahma Asmi*.” He went on repeating the mantra for days and a whole week. He became so engrossed and immersed in the chanting of the mantra that he actually identified with the mantra. He identified with it so much that he actually became an embodied Brahman, Brahman with a body, senses and mind.

Another disciple noticed this change and reported to the master, “I believe your new disciple is well on the path of realization.” The master said, “All right, let us test him.” The master called the aspirant and said, “Tell me about your experiences.” The aspirant said, “I see divinity all around me. My mind has been transformed. I have become the Supreme

Self and I see the whole world with the eyes of the Supreme Self. Everything looks beautiful to me as an extension of the supreme nature, the transcendental, Godly nature.” The guru said, “Look at the tree and tell me what you see.” The aspirant looked and said, “All I see is luminosity of the divine in every leaf, branch and twig.” The guru said, “Look at the animals on the road and tell me what you see.” The aspirant said, “I see divinity in the pig, the dog and the cow. I see divinity in all animals.” The guru said, “Wonderful. You are on your way to becoming self-realized. Do the ashram a favour. Go to the market and bring some vegetables.”

The young aspirant, fired by the inspiration of Brahman, took some money and a bag, and set off. When he reached the market, he saw that there was chaos all around. All the shutters were being pulled down and people were running here and there in fright. He wondered what was going on and stopped a passerby and asked, “Why is everybody running away from the market? Why are the shops being shut down?” The person said, “An elephant has become crazy and is trampling everyone and everything on its path. People are running to save their lives. You should also run away from here.” The aspirant thought, “All realized beings have a special energy, a special power with them. Buddha was able to quieten a mad elephant with his spiritual power. I have also attained the same realization as Buddha. I can tame that wild elephant.” He continued to walk and finally came face to face with the elephant that was creating havoc in the market.

He tried to send him peaceful vibes, “Become quiet . . . become passive . . . sit down . . . be happy . . . be contented.” However, the elephant was neither a sadhaka nor a disciple and it had not received any mantra from anybody. It only saw a two-legged creature standing in front of him, making strange gestures with its hands. That drove the elephant even madder. It wrapped its trunk around the person, lifted him up in the air and dashed him to the ground. Somehow, he managed to evade the trampling feet of the elephant and crawled back to the ashram on all fours, with every bone broken.

Noticing his pitiful condition, the guru asked, “What happened?” The aspirant, nervous, angry and dejected with his market experience, blurted out everything to his guru. The guru said, “You made a mistake.” The disciple asked, “How?” The guru said, “If you were able to see the higher nature in everyone, every life form, including the elephant, then where was your awareness when the man warned you not to go to the elephant? After all, he was also God. You disobeyed God and this is the result.”

The point of the story is that, after attaining the realization “I am that”, you look at the world around you and see the same reality differently. If you can experience God in yourself, you will begin to see God everywhere else: in a leaf, stone, insect, animal, human being, reptile and bird. The mind, the vision, the knowledge and perception will change, and this change will make you see the world from that perspective. If you wear black glasses, the world is seen as black. If you wear red glasses, the world is seen as red. If you wear material glasses, the world is seen as material. If you wear transcendental glasses, the world is seen as transcendental.

Aham Brahmasmi, the realization that “I am that” is like putting on transcendental glasses. You begin to see everything as Brahman. You say, “That is also Brahman. This is also Brahman.” Everything becomes that. This is the third realization: *Tat Twam Asi* – “You are that.” The whole world is seen as an emanation of that cosmic power. It is not only your realization, but even the world changes with your realization.

Imagine a student who is studying medicine for an MBBS degree. Two years pass, three years pass, four years pass. He is engaged in his studies, trying to understand each and every thing. He is trying to understand the science of the body; he is enhancing his knowledge in the area. He is trying to observe, know and understand every nerve and fibre of the human body, every organ and muscle. He is trying to understand their use, how to operate on them, how to treat

and cure them. He observes the blueprint of the whole body. Yet, he is not a doctor. Even though he has the knowledge of the body, he is not called a doctor. He is a student. Even when he receives the degree, he has not really become a doctor. He is a doctor only on paper. A student becomes a doctor when he treats his first patient. Having realized the knowledge, he brings it into use.

This is true of *Prajnanam Brahman* as well. When you think that the consciousness is pervaded by Brahma, it is not limited to you. You perceive the truth of this statement with respect to everyone. You are its blueprint and then you apply it to everyone else, because the same consciousness that is in you exists in everyone else. This is how the realization of this mahavakya leads to the second mahavakya, *Aham Brahmasmi*, and then the third mahavakya, *Tat Tvam Asi*. You attain the *advешta bhava*, the experience of non-duality. Thus, in the process of jnana yoga, the experience of *dwaita*, duality, is finished and *advaita*, non-duality, is realized.

Sri Krishna gives an indication of this in the *Bhagavad Gita*. He is asked (12:1), “What kind of a person is dear to you?” He replies, “I like the jnani and I like the bhakta.” He is asked next, “Why the jnani and bhakta?” Krishna replies, “The jnani tries to know Me through the intellect and accepts Me and surrenders to Me through the intellect. The bhakta surrenders himself totally. He does not apply his intellect; he surrenders his whole life. The two have different characters. It is not appropriate to ask who is better, because the character, nature and behaviour of the two are different. Both are dear to me. But remember this, if you have to attain Me, you have to be free of the dual experience. When you come near Me, the experience of I and you no longer remains. You become one with Me and I become one with you. The *dwaita bhava* turns into *atmabhava*.”

Sri Swamiji always says, “Cultivate *atmabhava*. See yourself in others.” Those of you who have heard him or read his satsangs will come across this statement often. It is a very simple way of explaining the state of jnana yoga. “See

yourself in others” means “You are that”, *Tat Twam Asi*.

Atmabhava means that you are able to project yourself in another person and become that person. You are able to see the other person differently, not as an outsider or a separate entity, but as an extension of yourself. This *atmabhava* of Sri Swamiji is the essence of the mahavakyas of the Vedas. It is the essence of jnana yoga.



When you come close to the Supreme Self, the *dwaita bhava* always converts into *atmabhava*. Once *atmabhava* is attained, one lives the experience of *advēshta sarvabhootanam* – “loving towards all creatures.” One does not see any difference any more and becomes endowed with special qualities which connect that person, that aspirant, with every being of the world. From *anu*, atomic, the person becomes *vibhu*, expansive. One becomes interconnected with each and everyone. The *anusandhana vakya*, *Aham Brahmasmi*, is realized only when one becomes *advēshta*, non-differentiating. Then you perceive the whole world filled with divinity. Awareness and knowledge become one, and that is what is expressed all the time. What is the expression of divinity? Not *siddhi*, but *shanti*. Not psychic powers, but peace. Peace is the experience of divinity. Lord Buddha would remain peaceful under every circumstance. Lord Rama would remain peaceful under every situation. Lord Krishna would remain peaceful under every situation. No one ever saw him become agitated. He was playful, yes, but not restless. The inner state of peace, which it is possible to continuously enhance, has been accepted as the first experience of divinity. When there is peace, there is contentment and fullness. There is no lack.

Fourth mahavakya: identification with the higher self

When you are able to see everything as part of that transcendental reality, anchored in peace, bliss and truth, then the fourth statement comes into play: *Ayam Atma Brahma* – “This soul is the higher self.” In this way, an identification is developed. The gross nature is transformed and transcended, and a higher identification is developed.

Learning is not enough

To conclude, I will tell you a story. In a certain village, there lived a donkey. He carried the washerman’s load all day long, but at night he wandered as he pleased, raiding farms and drinking from streams.

Once he met a horse who was also free to roam at night. Both became friends, and together they would graze at the lushest of farms while their owners were asleep.

One night, standing in the middle of a farm field, the donkey said to the horse, “The night is lovely and the moon is full. I think I will sing. In which raga should I sing?”

Alarmed, the horse said, “Friend, don’t get into trouble. The guards will wake up and beat us both.”

The donkey was in a different kind of mood. He said, “Oh, you don’t know the joys of music. My heart wants to sing, so I must.”

“That may be so,” said the horse. “But your heart doesn’t know your throat. You don’t have any clue about music. You can only make noise, so why harm yourself?”

“What? I don’t know music!” cried out the donkey. “Then hear this: the elements of music are one hundred and eighty-five, as stated in the scriptures.”

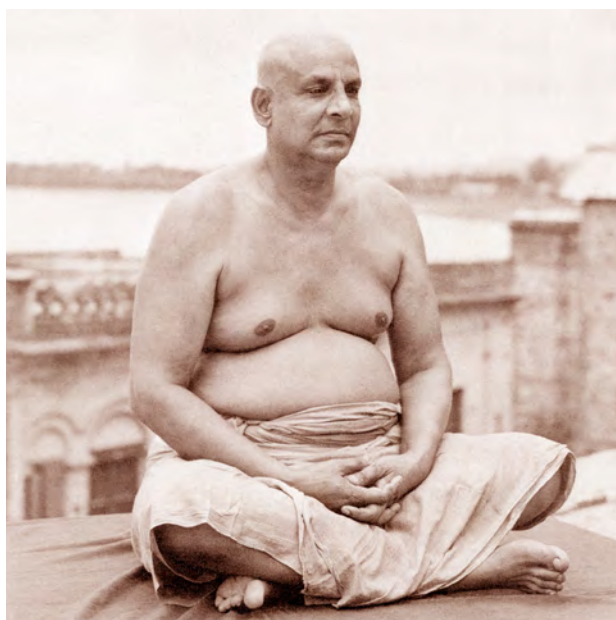
The horse said, “Your scriptural knowledge cannot make you into a singer. But if you insist, sing as you please. I shall go somewhere else.”

The horse left. The donkey squared his shoulders and started to bray to the moon. Hearing him, the guards came running out, caught him and gave him a good thrashing. Somehow, he managed to free himself and ran as hard as he

could, away from the farm. “Never again!” said the donkey when he finally stopped to catch his breath. And that was the end of his singing career.

The example of the poor donkey tells us that mere bookish knowledge cannot lead to true understanding or appropriate expression. On the contrary, it can land one in big trouble. To acquire perfection in any area, one needs to go through a process of training; one needs to become a sadhaka, and this is especially true of the path of jnana.

What also comes through in the story is that advice from a friend, no matter how well-meant, can hurt the ego. However, if the advice were from a source of inspiration, such as the guru, it would have a different effect. So, had the donkey been a sadhaka who had a guru, the story might have had a different ending. He would not have given up. Instead, with the right training, combining inspiration and method of transformation, he could have become a perfect singer in the course of time.



The Experience of Jnana

15 May 2011

The tradition speaks of five major yogas. Hatha yoga, for the wellbeing of body; raja yoga, for the management of mind and mental behaviours; bhakti yoga, for the management of emotions and channelling them towards a higher experience; karma yoga, for developing efficiency and creativity in all interactions in life; and jnana yoga, for transformation of the gross intellect into a higher, spiritual and transcendental intelligence. These five yogas constitute the complete personality of yoga. Hatha yoga is the body. Raja yoga is the mind. Bhakti yoga is emotions. Jnana yoga is intelligence. Karma yoga is limbs of action. Among all these yogas, hatha yoga is the most commonly practised, while only a few practise raja yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga and karma yoga.

Swami Sivananda, our satguru, says that the human nature is composed of the qualities of head, heart and hands. For an integrated development and nurturing of human life, it is important to work on these three aspects together. The heart represents the practice of bhakti yoga, the hands represent the practice of karma yoga, and the head represents the practice of jnana yoga. In this context, hatha yoga and raja yoga are the base platforms from which one can launch into the higher experiences of yoga.

Hatha yoga and raja yoga are the foundations on which you build the strength of your emotions, intelligence and

interactions in life. In the sequence of development, the practices of hatha yoga represent the primary class of yoga. The practices of raja yoga represent the high school of yoga. Bhakti yoga, karma yoga and jnana yoga represent the university education of yoga. All these yogas take you to the perfection of body, mind, emotions, performance and intelligence.

A practice of sublimation

Of all the yogas, jnana yoga is the least known and understood, yet widely spoken about. Although it is a very important aspect of the system of yoga, not many people understand the process or even know of the transformation that jnana yoga can bring about in life, yet they continue to speak of jnana yoga as a philosophy.

Jnana yoga is not a philosophy. It is a *sadhana*, a practice. The focus and purpose of this sadhana is very clear: transforming and sublimating the gross nature of the intelligence, *buddhi*, to realize the true nature of the self. I prefer using the word ‘buddhi’ rather than ‘intelligence’, as it denotes a specific process and function of the greater mind. The function of buddhi is to know; it is the faculty of knowing. This knowing takes place in every dimension: gross, subtle, causal and transcendental. With each realization, buddhi is sublimated. It becomes finer, more refined, centred, creative, expressive and balanced.

Play of life and buddhi

From the perspective of yoga, the experience of buddhi comes after that of ego identity, *ahamkara*. The concept of *mahat* or ‘greater mind’ in yoga comprises four different experiences of consciousness. The first experience in the manifest dimension is the ego. The second experience is in the form of buddhi, the faculty of knowing. The third experience is *chitta*, the storehouse of memories, samskaras and karmas. The fourth aspect is *manas*, the ability to think and reflect. These four together constitute the greater mind.

Of the four, manas and buddhi form the gross mind. Chitta and ahamkara remain hidden behind these. Buddhi guides the functions of manas, the interactive mind, by creating different vrittis and associations. When you are born, your energies and consciousness are confined by the senses and the individual expressions of manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara. The condition of the four faculties and the senses are tamasic: confined, contained, identified, limited. The state of tamas is a pre-conditioned state, in which the interaction with the senses leads you to attach with sense objects. This is the play of life. Buddhi dictates the mind, the mind motivates the senses, the senses attach with sense objects. All the experiences of pleasure and pain arise due to this association and interaction between buddhi, manas, the senses and the world. This is the play of life.

In this process, buddhi is the cause of creating different mental moods, states, conditions and modifications, which are known as *vrittis*. Buddhi creates them. In fact, it may be said that vrittis germinate in the womb of buddhi and take birth in chitta, just as you grow for nine months in the womb of your mother and are born into the world. For nine months, you develop in the womb of the mother and when you take birth, you come into the world. In the same manner, the mental modifications, moods and behaviours live in the womb of buddhi and take birth in chitta. In the *Yoga Sutras*, Sage Patanjali specifically refers to chitta vrittis (1:2):

Yogah chitta vritti nirodhah.

To channel and guide the movement of the expressions of the mind is the purpose of yoga.

Positive role of negative vrittis

Vrittis have an important role to play in life, as they make you aware of what you are looking at. They remove the veil from an object so you can perceive it clearly. This is a new concept. It can be explained with an example. Say, you are angry with someone. The vritti or mood expressing in your



mind at that moment is that of anger. In this state, you may deal with the person who is the cause of your anger then and there, but the vritti of anger remains in you and makes you irritable. It makes you see all the faults that you never before observed, aggravating your irritation and leading you to fire people, “Why did you leave that here? Why did you not move it there?” Little things are noticed. The vritti uncovers a chain of reactions and responses. This is how vrittis remove the veil from an object of perception and therefore they are important. While this is the positive aspect of vrittis, as the flow and direction of your mind and buddhi connect you with the world of senses, all your vrittis are in relation to the senses, sense objects and the mind.

Once, an experiment was conducted in the US. The scientists visited a cinema hall and caught hold of a group of people emerging from a show, and asked them to go to the

laboratory with them. At the laboratory, they asked, “You were sitting in the cinema hall for three hours. Tell us how many fans did the hall have?” No one could give the correct answer. Some said eight, some said ten, some said twenty, but no number was accurate. Now the scientists asked, “How many windows did the cinema hall have?” No one could give the correct reply to that either. Now the scientists put the group under hypnosis, and asked the same question. In the state of hypnosis, the participants in the experiment gave the exact number of fans and windows in the cinema hall. They could even tell how many rows of chairs were there.

This is a subtle vritti; it was watching and absorbing everything. The same vritti, when it is gross, makes you see and experience everything at the state or level of awareness. You are all sitting here. You have been coming here for four days. The students have been coming here for class every day. If someone were to ask them, “You’ve been coming here for four months, tell us how many fans this room has,” no one will be able to tell. They will have to count. However, in the state of hypnosis you will be able to tell the exact number without counting. This is the play of vrittis.

When a vritti plays in the womb of buddhi, its form is subtle. It may not have manifested in your awareness, but it is working subtly. It is making your mind conscious of absorbing, knowing and understanding everything. When the same vritti is born in chitta, then you become fully aware of objects. Imagine a pot placed here. You don’t look at it, but when the vritti of pot appears in your chitta, your mind goes towards the pot. You notice that a pot is kept here. This is known as awareness of the object or attention. Thus, it is vritti that connects your buddhi with the objective world and provides its knowledge and experience.

The object-oriented vritti has its use. When your attention goes towards an object, you begin to desire it. Say, you are walking in the market to buy vegetables and you spot some beautiful mangoes at a vendor’s. You had come out to buy vegetables, but you end up buying some mangoes too. This

is the play of vrittis. In another situation, you may go to the market for something and spot a lovely car in a showroom. The car vritti awakens and makes you recognize the car. You return home and assess whether you need the car, check your bank balance and calculate the cost of the car. If there is enough, the next day you go and buy the car. This is the job of vrittis. Their role is to connect you with objects, to make you recognize sense objects and then create craving or repulsion towards them.

Whenever someone wants to advance on the spiritual path, the object-oriented vritti always pulls it back to the world. Even if you want to contemplate on God, it pulls you back to the world. You again try to meditate and focus your mind and buddhi in your aim. When the vritti of silence and concentration awakens within, the object-oriented vritti again comes and disturbs that new mental vritti. This is how the play of vrittis is experienced by the mind.

Yogis say that it is not necessary to eradicate vrittis completely. You cannot eradicate the mental modifications and you should not even try to do so. To stop vrittis completely is to kill the mind. If you kill your mind, you will cease to exist. Vrittis are the way they are, as that is their function, *swabhava*, character or nature. How then can you handle vrittis? They must be channelled from their extroverted interaction to introverted or inner responses. When vrittis are converted from gross to spiritual, there is the experience of peace, bliss and contentment. As long as vrittis are extroverted, there is strife, conflict and confusion.

It is said in jnana yoga that when your vrittis become attached with the world, then you experience bondage, struggle, lack of peace, suffering and happiness – all the experiences of the world. But when you pull your mind away from the objects of the world and centre it in a thought, the object-oriented vrittis are cut off and peace of mind is experienced. Contentment is experienced. That peace and contentment which is mental, takes you towards the spiritual experience, and to become established in the spiritual experience is the purpose of jnana yoga.

Multiwit vrittis

In a certain pond there lived two fish, Shatabuddhi and Sahasrabuddhi, or Centiwit and Multiwit. They made friends with a frog called Ekabuddhi, or Uniwit. The three would often spend time together, discussing philosophy.

One evening, as they were busy talking, some fishermen passed by the lake. One of them said to the other, "Ah! This lake appears to be full of fish. Let us come here tomorrow for our catch."

Hearing this, the three friends became concerned and began to discuss what to do. Multiwit laughed and said, "We need not be frightened. Words don't mean anything. Those fishermen may not come at all. Even if they do, I will protect us all with my innumerable tricks of movement in water."

Centiwit said, "Well spoken! I too will protect you with my one hundred talents. This lake is our home and we love it. We should not go anywhere."

Hearing both, Uniwit the frog said, "I have only one talent, the ability to foresee, and it counsels me to go away. I will leave for some other place this very night."

The fishermen came at dawn and caught all the water dwellers in their nets, including Multiwit and Centiwit. At midday they left the lake, carrying their heavy catch, with Centiwit on a fisherman's head and Multiwit in another's hand, as they were the last to be caught.

Uniwit was sitting by a well nearby. Watching this sight, he said to his wife,

"Multiwit goes hanging there
And Centiwit on head does stay.
Though I, my dear, have but one wit,
In clear waters still I play."

Can you guess what the story indicates?

The frog, Uniwit, had one-pointedness of mind. Therefore, he was able to apply *viveka*, discrimination. His mind was not dissipated like that of the two fish, who used their minds only for playing in the water in a hundred and

thousand ways, indicating their *bahirmukhi* and *vishayakara* vritti, extroverted pattern of the mind and identification with sense objects. Unlike the fish, attachment for the lake did not deter the frog, for he had *vairagya*, non-attachment.

It was the special quality of his buddhi that helped the frog to be observant, to be a drashta, and see what his friends could not see. Thus he saved himself from being caught in the net of the fishermen: the world of maya, and travelled to a place where there was complete freedom.

The story is about vrittis. One fish is Multiwit, one thousand wits; the other is Centiwit, one hundred wits. The frog is Uniwit, single wit. Vrittis are multiwits.

Sri Swamiji tells a story from his childhood days. Once, he was given a pair of trousers which he was required to wear for an important function the next day. When he tried them on, they were an inch too long. Wanting them to be cut to size, he went to his mother and said, "Mother, the pants are too long for me. Can you please cut them by an inch so I can wear them tomorrow?" She said, "I am busy in the kitchen right now. I cannot do it. Ask somebody else." Sri Swamiji went to his grandmother and said, "Grandma, my pants are a bit too long. I want them cut about an inch." She said, "I am in the middle of my japa. I cannot do it. Ask somebody else." Now Sri Swamiji went to his sister and said, "My pants are long on me. I want them cut about an inch." She said, "I have my exams tomorrow and I am busy studying. I will not be able to alter them. Find somebody else." Sri Swamiji went to the maid and said, "Cut my pants one inch shorter." The maid took the scissors, snipped off an inch from the trousers, sewed up the ends and put them on his bed. After about half an hour, the sister came – she had finished studying – and noticed the trousers lying on the bed. She took the scissors and cut an inch off, sewed up the ends, left the trousers on the bed and went away. After half an hour, the grandmother walked in. She saw the trousers and picked up the scissors, snip-snip, another inch off, and left them on the bed. When the mother finished her kitchen work, she came, picked up



the trousers and again, snip-snip. When Sri Swamiji came and tried on the trousers, they reached up to his knees!

The full pants became half pants, as everybody cut an inch off. Since then, Sri Swamiji has always held up one finger. He says, “Always listen to one, follow one, remain with one. If you go with many, you will end up with half pants instead of full pants.”

Buddhi is a multiwit. There are people who come to me and say, “I have this problem. What do you think about it? Do you have a solution?” I give them an answer. Soon after, I see the person go to another swami and say, “I have this problem. I have been discussing with Swamiji and he has said this. What is your opinion?” The other swami speaks for an hour to give a suggestion. The person goes to a third swami and says, “I have this problem. I have been talking to this swami and I have also spoken to Swamiji. This is what they have said. What do you think?” In this way, they go to about twenty people asking for views, opinions, guidelines and advice, and never follow any instruction or guideline.

The multiwit buddhi is acting out its nature here. For buddhi to accept anything as final is difficult. It is always

twisting, turning and going through gymnastics. It is this gymnastics of buddhi which affects the mind and makes it dissipated, distracted and agitated. Yogis say that in order to still the mind, to go in and discover one's real nature, it is important to first manage the buddhi. You have to convert the buddhi which is associating with sense objects into a transcendental buddhi. This is the thought with which jnana yoga begins: how to convert the gross nature of buddhi into a transcendental nature.

Basis of contemplation

The ancient rishis perfected the subject of jnana yoga. They contemplated, practised sadhana, lived in isolation, meditated and achieved higher states of consciousness. In these states, they realized what an ordinary person would not be able to realize in the course of life. These realizations were recorded in the Vedas.

The yogis and rishis realized that it is possible to extract the buddhi from the influence of the material world, from *maya*, the illusory world, and to centre it in its true nature where it experiences the truth and auspicious qualities of nature, and can express the beauty of life: *Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram*. They said it is possible to convert the buddhi to experience the truth and not identify with sense objects. It is possible to fix buddhi in a state where everything is filled with contentment and auspiciousness, and remove it from the states of conflict, dissipations, distractions and disturbances. They said it is possible to express the beauty of life without cursing God or destiny for one's suffering. This change in the mental behaviour uplifts the gross nature of the individual and makes one balanced, harmonious, peaceful, happy and contented. It connects the individual with the higher nature.

How can one change the pattern of the mind, the thinking and buddhi, to disassociate from the gross and connect with the transcendental? The yogis say, "Contemplate on four conditions."

Spontaneous unfolding of mahavakyas

The first condition is the first mahavakya: *Prajnanam Brahman* – “Consciousness is Brahman.”

Brahman is a peculiar concept in the Indian spiritual tradition. It represents the unmanifest, undivided, infinite nature of God, where the powers of omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence are at their peak. It represents the supreme God. This unmanifest supreme transcendental reality is comprised of the components of consciousness and energy. That is the cosmic or supreme state. When there is manifestation, prakriti or maya becomes part of that divine transcendental quality, and it is of the same potency or strength as Brahman. When maya unites with Brahman, Brahman is called Ishwara. This means that limitations are now entering that omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent state. What was omnipresent is now being confined by maya into a form, name and quality. That aspect of God is known as Ishwara.

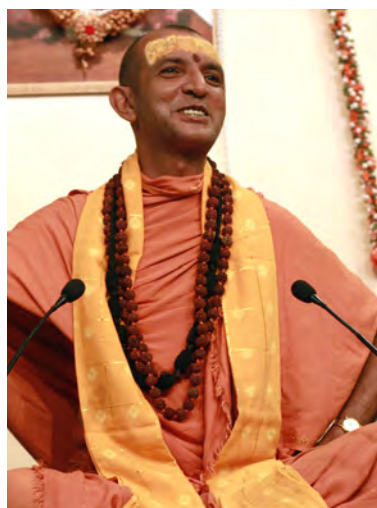
The statement, “Consciousness is Brahman”, indicates that the consciousness inherent in each being is as expansive as the highest consciousness. The essence of water, whether in a raindrop, ocean or a glass is always the same: H₂O. Whether the water is salty or sweet, clear or coloured does not matter. The essence is always the same. In the same manner, the essence of consciousness in you is the same as the transcendental consciousness or Brahman.

You may be tamasic or rajasic on the surface, you may be a good or a bad person, but the basic, essential and true quality of consciousness is the same as the transcendental consciousness. This whole world is the same as that transcendental consciousness. That tree and that animal contain that same transcendental consciousness. In some it is one percent awakened and in some it is ninety percent awakened, but all are different forms of that same element. This whole creation is its manifestation. The yogis say, contemplate on this and realize that you are pure consciousness, unbound by the external sense objects and senses.

A thought comes into your mind, "That person is bad." Such a thought is followed by a reflection, "All right, my material mind saw that person in the form of a rogue, but according to *Prajnanam Brahman* even that rogue contains the same transcendental consciousness which is in me. Perhaps that man is only ten percent awake to that transcendental consciousness whereas I am eighty percent awake to it, but there is a common factor between us." When such a feeling comes, you no longer see the rogue as a rogue but as a good person. The rogue-ness becomes a trait or character of his, an expression, but the person himself is perceived as the transcendental consciousness. This is *Prajnanam Brahman*. You change your form of thinking.

Don't perceive everything through the covering of *tamas*, through the glasses of *tamas*. You have been seeing the world through the glasses of *tamas*, now remove those glasses and wear the glasses of *sattwa*. You will see the world differently. Thus, *Prajnanam Brahman* is the first statement on which one has to contemplate to uplift the mind from its gross identification to a higher identification. With this contemplation, gradually you come to the point of realization, "Yes, today I truly feel that everything is part of that higher nature." When you go on seeing the world through the glasses of *sattwa*, you see the play of God in everything, the reflection of God in every heart. That is the state of *Prajnanam Brahman*.

Now, the second realization dawns: "I am also part of that nature. I am that." That is the second statement on which *jnana* yogis contemplate. *Aham Brahmasmi* – "I am that Brahman, I am the Supreme Self." When I was a child, a question would occur to me, it would have occurred to you also: "Do all human beings look alike? Do I look like that person? Or do I look different?" As part of play, I would stand in front of the mirror and compare myself with others, "My complexion is like this, his is like that. My eyes are like this, his are like that." Thus, in both *Prajnanam Brahman* and *Aham Brahmasmi* we compare ourselves with others, "If



I am Brahman, then what is he? Am I better or worse than him? His Brahma-hood is appearing rather dark due to his nature. It is connected with desire, lust, anger and deceit. His Godliness is hazy. Yet, he is *Prajnanam Brahman*, and the same element is within me. *Aham Brahmasmi*.”

When you become established in this idea, then the third statement is expressed naturally and spontaneously: *Tat Tvam Asi* – “You are also

that Supreme Self.” Everything is seen as part of that Supreme Self. Each experience in life is perceived as emanating from that higher source. This is followed by the fourth statement: *Ayam Atma Brahma* – “All this that I have perceived is nothing but a reflection of the higher Self.”

The first mahavakya, *Prajnanam Brahman*, is *lakshana vakya*, the statement indicating a quality. The second, *Aham Brahmasmi*, is *anusandhana vakya*, something that one has to research on. The third, *Tat Tvam Asi*, is *upadesha vakya*, the statement that is taught, and the fourth, *Ayam atma Brahma*, is *anubhava vakya*, the statement of experience. After the first two statements are realized, the realized one teaches others: *Tat Tvam Asi* – “You are That.” The student has to now realize the fourth statement. This is where the student is tested.

When he begins to think, “I have also become that, I have become like my guru”, then the guru says, “Let us go for a stroll in the market.” In the market, the guru stops at an alcohol shop and gulps down a bottle of whiskey. The disciple thinks, “I have become like my guru, so there is no harm in drinking whiskey”, and he also gulps down a bottle. Now Gururji goes to a red light district. Singing and dancing is underway. He sits down to watch the performance. The disciple, who is standing

outside, thinks, “I’ve become like my guru, I can also join in”, and he goes in and enjoys with Guruji. Now Guruji comes out and enters a glass factory. He picks up a bottle of molten glass and swallows it neat. The disciple watches and says, “I am not like my guru. Only Guruji can do this.” At this point, the disciple forgets *Tat Twam Asi*. He again begins to see himself in the small, atomic form. So the guru again tells him, “Son, *Tat Twam Asi*. You are That, but you began to compare yourself with others which became the cause of your downfall.” The disciple says, “Right Guruji, I’ve understood my mistake. Everything is a manifestation of that transcendental consciousness. This soul, that soul, all are its manifestations. I will not think that I am equal to you; I will think that everything is filled with that Spirit element. *Ayam Atma Brahma*, This soul is Brahma.” This is how jnana yoga develops in life.

Blueprint of life

Consciousness contains the blueprint of life. A blueprint or preparatory design is always made before an actual product, whether it is a bicycle, house or motorcar. A blueprint always precedes the actual creation of an object. In the same manner, a blueprint of life is also made. You do not know what that blueprint is, you have never seen it, just as you don’t see the blueprint of a car; you buy the final product and receive the operating manual. The blueprint of the car is in the factory; this screw goes here, this is connected there, this pin goes here. Everything is in that blueprint.

The blueprint of life is made before you are born. You follow the pattern as defined in it, but you are not aware of it. The blueprint contains the idea of transcendence and also of bondage. The ultimate purpose of life is to identify with the higher nature instead of the gross nature. The four mahavakyas or statements aid in creating a pattern of thoughts which allows you to identify with that state and disconnect from the gross state. The Vedas and the rishis defined these four statements for contemplation and people started to say, “This is jnana yoga.”

The jnana yogi's conundrum

The problem with the practice of contemplation is that if you try to think of something different, the gross mind will always pull you back to itself. The vritti which is material and gross does not like to lose its identity. That is why it is so difficult to concentrate; the mind always becomes directed to another point of focus due to the gross vritti pulling it back, from its endeavour to achieve a higher experience, to the physical and material experience.

There is a natural conflict between the transcendental and gross vrittis, and the gross vrittis always pull you back from the transcendental vrittis. This is a continuous struggle in the life of a jnana yogi. In order to stop the struggle, a sequence of steps has been provided.

The experience of that omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient element is not just the realization of the rishis and munis, but a very real possibility for everyone. However, whether or not you will have this experience depends upon the effort you make. When you intend to travel from Munger to Patna, if you complete your journey you will reach Patna. If you stop midway, you will be stranded in some village. In the same way, the individual soul begins to travel towards Brahma-hood equipped with the object-oriented vrittis. Even though there is experience of eternal peace and joy, bliss, truth and beauty in Brahman, people do not receive this experience because they are always searching for it in the world. Therefore, in the travel towards Brahma-hood, you need to be equipped with some other weapons. If you journey somewhere, wouldn't you pack your bags with all that you need? You will even choose the right mode of travel. A lot of effort needs to be made to ensure that you reach the destination. Pack the bags, sit in the vehicle, spend hours on the train, and finally the destination is reached. This preparation is called *sadhana chatushtaya*, the fourfold effort, or rather, making the resolve to undertake the fourfold effort. It is comprised of viveka, vairgya, shat sampatti and mumukshutwa.

Riding the waves of jnana

Intensity of yearning: First, there must be a desire to become free from the bondages of life and explore the unknown, higher dimensions. This is *mumukshutwa*, and the first idea that has to develop in the mind of a jnana yogi.

Imagine that somebody holds your head down in water and you are struggling to come to the surface and breathe. The more the head is pushed under, the more acute the struggle. In the same manner, there has to be an intensity to come out of the gross nature and conditioning by saying to yourself, “I have had enough of this world. Now I want to improve myself, improve my interactions in life and change them. Until now, by living as I have been, I have always experienced problems, conflicts, pleasures, pain, suffering, happiness, joy and discontentment as part of my life. Can I go beyond these? Can I find my stable nature?” That yearning, that thought has to first manifest. Not mere curiosity, but a yearning to become free must be there.

Usually, people are motivated into spiritual life by curiosity and not yearning. They practise yoga not because of their yearning and desire, but because they are curious. People practise kriya yoga, mantra, kundalini yoga and every kind of technique only because they are curious, not because they are interested in these. That applies to you too. You practise that which you are curious about. You do the practices to satisfy your curiosity, without any definite aim or aspiration. Remember, curiosity kills the cat. You need to have a focus, a yearning, a motivation, an inspiration. That is what will allow you to break out of your shell and become free. Otherwise, your effort will only be for your entertainment. It will not bring about your spiritual evolution. Therefore, in the practice of jnana yoga, the first requirement is cultivation of the yearning, “I want to be free.” That is called *mumukshutwa*, the desire to be free and realize something different.

Discriminative ability: When this desire and yearning becomes intense and deep, the next quality which is attained spontaneously is cultivation of *viveka*. The intense

yearning makes you observe the situations around keenly and clearly, enabling you to decide whether those situations are appropriate for your development and growth, or inappropriate. This leads you to make the right choice.

Life is about finding the right choice. Sri Swamiji always says, “There are no simple solutions in life, only right choices.” Life gives you the choices, but you are looking for solutions, you are not looking for the available choices. Therefore, you miss the right choice. Even if it is right before you, you are not able to see it. However, with this intense yearning followed by observation, the right choice is made. That right choice is known as *viveka*, the discriminative ability.

Spontaneous elimination: When the right choice is made, there is repulsion from or rejection of the unwanted. That is *vairagya*, which is the third attainment of jnana yoga. When the right choice is made, the wrong choice is left aside. You know it is wrong. It will hamper your growth, be detrimental to your aspirations and limit your effort, and you reject it. Without any other thought, it is simply left behind. Thus, with *viveka*, the discriminative ability, elimination also takes place, which is *vairagya*.

Sequential meditation: After having attained the three attributes – the intense yearning to become free, *viveka* and *vairagya* – the meditative states are entered into, in order to guide the manifestations, modifications and vrittis of the mind. Meditation begins in the fourth stage and becomes the process to perfect jnana yoga. In this meditative process, the first step is stilling, controlling and guiding the senses. Sensory control is the first stage of meditation. In the second stage, you observe the mental behaviours and pacify them. Mind control is the second stage of meditation. The third stage is cultivating the *drashta bhava*, the ability to witness actions, situations, environments and surroundings. Imagine that you are sitting in your room looking out of the window and watching the world go by. That is the concept of *drashta*, witnessing life; find your niche and watch everything from there.

Six virtues: After cultivating the drashta awareness, the next step is acquiring and nurturing six qualities, known as *shat sampatti* or six virtues. These six virtues or qualities, when adopted, allow the newly-attained state of mind to continue without any change, distraction or disturbance.

The first quality is *sama*, which means establishing oneself in a peaceful state of mind. Now, listen carefully. Intense yearning, viveka, vairagya, sensory control in meditation, mental control in meditation and becoming the witness are the first six requirements. Through these, you train your mind. Having trained the mind, you now try to maintain



the new mental state in normal, everyday situations. It is in this context that sama means maintaining the mental state of equilibrium and peace. You have to be alert all the time. Undertaking your normal activities, whether you go to office or stay at home, whether you are a farmer, engineer or doctor, whatever profession or environment you are in, you always make the effort to maintain that peaceful state of mind.

The commander of the senses is the mind. If you can control the mind, then the senses will automatically come under control. The senses are the soldiers and the mind is the commander. If you can win over the commander, then the soldiers will not work against you. If you are unable to win over the commander, both the commander and the soldiers will attack you. Thus, to maintain the mind at peace is called sama. Keep the commander under control, maintain the peaceful state of mind that you acquired.

The practice is done only for a short duration, whether in the morning or evening. You undertake the practice for perhaps one hour in twenty-four hours. In the remaining twenty-three hours, you need to maintain the state of mind you attained during the practice. When you are not doing your sadhana and are involved in normal activities, you have to maintain the same state of mind. This is where the six virtues come in, as they help maintain what you achieved. After cultivation of the witness attitude, when you go about your normal routine in life, rather than reacting and responding to the world as before, you become aware of maintaining the state of peace and tranquillity.

The second virtue is *dama*, maintaining sensorial control. Do not allow the senses to run wild, but keep a track of them. You have to treat your senses like a child. If you notice they are about to do something dangerous, you should be able to stop them and say, "Come back to your place." Treating the senses like a child and guiding them to come back and become still is *dama*, sensory restraint. You acquired control of the senses in the previous stages too, now you have to maintain that state, that quality.

The third virtue is *uparati*, which means maintaining the state of contentment in life. If there is continuous contentment, then there is no distraction or agitation of any kind in life. One is always flowing freely, without tripping over stones lying on the road. Contentment also brings into focus your successes and failures and teaches you to remain balanced in both. Success and failure can create havoc with the state of contentment. If there is failure, the entire idea of contentment goes away. If there is success, there is such ballooning of contentment that it is deflated very fast. Thus, a continuous state of contentment brings into focus success and failure, and balance in both.

The fourth virtue is *titiksha*, patience. A man was once praying to God, "God, please grant me patience. Now!" Nobody is patient, especially when desires and needs come into play. You lose that state of patience; you are not able to maintain it continuously. Thus, being able to hold the inner peace is the fourth requirement. You may have attained all the above stages, but you have to live in the world, among family, work, travel, business and relationships. These are not being given up. You are living among them all. Therefore, despite the attainments, the influences of the world will affect the mind and pull it towards them. At that moment, *titiksha* is necessary. You will experience pain whose source is external and it requires patience to endure it. You will face troubles and struggles, and they require deep patience. Thus, doing all that you must, but not becoming impatient due to the influences of the world is *titiksha*.

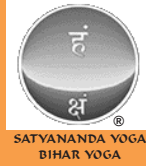
Shraddha is the fifth virtue. It means faith. Faith in what? In three things: God, guru and the scriptures. These are the three areas where faith must be directed. Once your faith becomes established in these three, then life begins to become organized and disciplined. It is necessary to have faith to bring balance into life. Without faith and belief it is not possible to have the experience of the inner Self, no matter how great a yogi or siddha one is. *Shraddha* must be maintained.

The sixth virtue is *samadhana*, which means finding the final solution. Adi Guru Shankaracharya in a literature, *Atma-Anatma*, defines samadhana or finding the final solution in relation to the mind. He describes it as the mind fixed on a contemplative idea. The mind moves away from that idea to some other thought or idea. After spending some time in the other thought or idea, it comes back naturally to its original point of concentration and identification. That is called samadhana. It can also mean that you do not lose the focus of your aim. You may become diverted for some time here and there, but you always come back to your focus. That focus is permanent and constant.

By maintaining these six qualities, you are able to continue and maintain the higher state of consciousness and gradually come to the point of realization of truth, auspiciousness and beauty. With the help of dhyana you create a building, and then with shat sampatti continuously maintain and upkeep that building, making sure that no dust or cobwebs gather in it. The construction of the building is undertaken with the help of mumukshutwa, viveka, vairagya, sense control, mind control and the awakening of the drashta bhava. To upkeep the building that has been constructed is the job of shat sampatti. When this state becomes established in life, then the vedic sadhana of jnana yoga begins. The contemplation on the mahavakyas is undertaken.

State of jnana: ceaseless awareness

Speaking about jnana yoga is easy, but practising is not so easy, as it requires you to be continuously aware. It requires moment to moment awareness of everything. That is the type of mind which yogis try to cultivate, in which there is moment to moment awareness. It is not enough to say, “Live in the present.” It is important to be aware of every moment that you live, so that you can experience the beauty of that moment. You can experience the truth of that moment. You can experience the beneficial qualities of that particular moment. This is the process and attainment of jnana yoga.



“The method of understanding the process of jnana yoga has to be understood properly. Is jnana only questioning? No. It is enlarging the scope of perception. It is not enquiry. It is like working with an adjustable torchlight. You can twist its head to bring the light to a narrow point or enlarge its perimeter.”

The Yogadrishti (Yogavision) series of satsangs consists of discourses given by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati in Munger as part of the new phase of sannyasa life that he has embarked upon since 2009.

Jnana yoga was the theme of the satsangs which Swamiji gave in May 2011 at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth. Providing a fresh, new perspective on the classical components of jnana yoga, Swamiji renders this complicated subject accessible. He outlines the step-by-step training necessary to attain the aims of jnana yoga and describes how the profound statements of the Vedas, the mahavakyas, unfold naturally in the process. The discourses shine with spiritual inspiration and practical guidance in the method of applying intelligence and developing true wisdom in life.



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